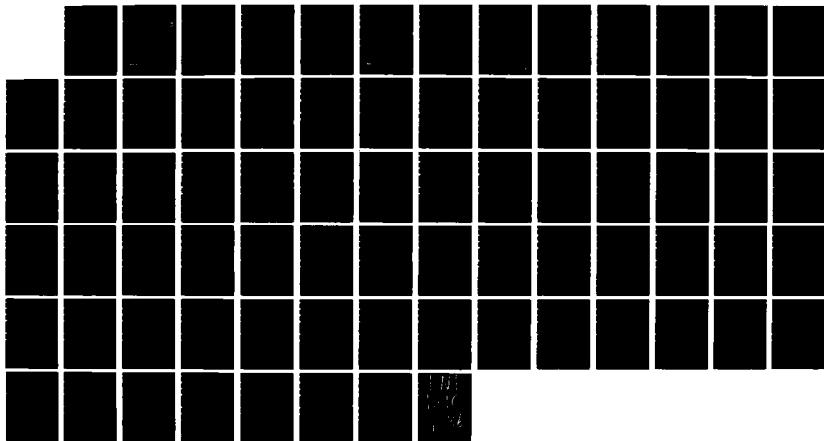
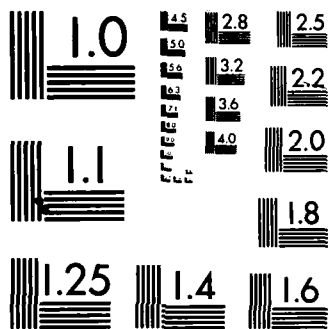


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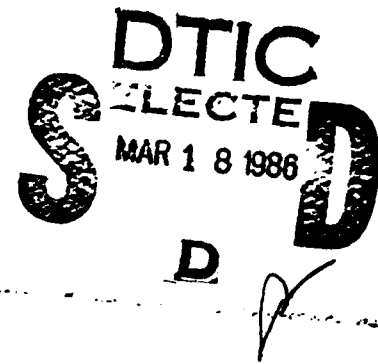
Bruce Hoffman

October 1985

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Prepared for

**The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense
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) This Note assesses the effectiveness of a selected sample of raids executed by small commando and commando-type forces in response to terrorist threats or attacks. One hundred raids by irregular forces (guerrilla groups, terrorist organizations, and private individuals) and elite units (organized military units belonging to a country's national armed forces) were examined in terms of: (1) previous training of the personnel involved in the mission; (2) the geographical position from which the raiding parties embarked; (3) the effectiveness of methods of transportation used; (4) the character of the mission (destruction, stand-off assault, rescue, kidnap, or assassination); (5) the size of the raiding party; and (6) the effect of disguise and/or deception on mission outcome. Seventy-seven percent of the raids accomplished their objective, indicating that obstacles such as geographic distances and well-defended enemy positions can be overcome by the stealth and mobility of small paramilitary and military units. The author concludes that commando warfare and small-group raids may be a useful adjunct to U.S. military policy for responding to terrorist attacks or provocations. An Appendix provides an annotated listing of the 100 raids studied. ←

A RAND NOTE

COMMANDO RAIDS: 1946-1983

Bruce Hoffman

October 1985

N-2316-USDP

Prepared for

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense
for Policy

Rand

1700 MAIN STREET
P.O. BOX 2138
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PREFACE

The research reported here was sponsored by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy under a study effort entitled "Military Options in Response to Terrorism." The initial stages of the work were supported by The Rand Corporation using its own funds. This study is based in part on earlier, unpublished research--on small-scale commando raids--conducted by Rand in 1977-1978 for Sandia Laboratories.

The present Note focuses on the effectiveness of commando and commando-type raids mounted during the period from 1946 to 1983 in response to terrorist attacks. Future research will examine other issues relevant to the development of a counterterrorist doctrine for the United States.

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SUMMARY

This Note assesses the effectiveness of a selected sample of raids executed by small (and relatively small) commando and commando-type forces in response to terrorist threats or attacks.¹ One hundred raids by irregular forces (guerrilla groups, terrorist organizations, and private individuals) and elite units (organized military units belonging to a country's national armed forces) were examined in terms of:

1. Previous training of the personnel involved in the mission (whether they were members of elite, highly trained national military forces, ad hoc teams assembled for specific missions, irregular guerrilla fighters, or urban terrorists).
2. The geographical position from which the raiding parties embarked (i.e., whether the mission was international, cross-border, or indigenous).
3. The effectiveness of methods of transportation employed both to infiltrate into and withdraw from the target.
4. The character of the mission (destruction, stand-off assault, rescue, kidnap, or assassination).
5. The size of the raiding party.
6. The effect of disguise and/or deception on mission outcome.

More than three-quarters of the raids (77 out of 100) accomplished their objective. This success rate demonstrates that obstacles such as geographic distances and well-defended enemy positions manned by superior forces can be overcome by the stealth and mobility of small paramilitary and military units.

¹In this context, "small" and "relatively small" forces are defined as those with one or two persons and those with less than 400 persons, respectively. The raids included in our sample are those for which sufficient information was available on the objective, size of raiding party, means of transportation used, and geographical distance involved.

Our conclusions suggest that commando warfare and small-group raids may be an attractive option as part of a U.S. counterterrorism strategy. Admittedly, not all of the operations reviewed in this study are applicable to U.S. goals or compatible with defined military policy and rules of engagement. For example, international operations--the type of operations the U.S. military would most likely be called upon to execute--had the lowest overall success rate (61 percent). Moreover, two of the five successful operations achieved by elite military forces (the West German rescue of hostages aboard a hijacked airliner at Mogadishu and the Indonesian rescue of hijacked airline passengers at Bangkok) occurred in "permissive" environments, where the raiders had the support and cooperation of the local government. When these two operations are excluded, the success rate of elite forces declines to 33 percent. Nevertheless, commando and commando-type warfare possesses a number of advantages:

- It involves only small numbers of men in a limited engagement.
- Commando missions are generally of short duration.
- Because of mobility, stealth, surprise, and the deliberate avoidance of direct contact (except when necessary) with larger forces, casualties to the raiding party can be kept to a minimum.
- Small parties can be successfully and speedily infiltrated into and withdrawn from their objectives.
- Small raiding parties can more easily be kept secret, and thus their operations can be covert (this is especially advantageous if the raids fail).

There are generally few military options for responding to terrorism. But given the increasing frequency of international terrorist attacks directed against U.S. personnel and interests, the continuing problem of state-sponsored terrorism, and the reluctance of the American public to support sustained military operations that could result in large numbers of American casualties, the U.S. military should make every effort to broaden the range of available counterterrorist

options. Commando warfare or operations by small forces of raiders have proven effective in accomplishing a wide range of missions, over considerable geographical distances, and employing different types of transportation. Such operations may be a useful adjunct to U.S. military policy for responding to terrorist attacks or provocations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once again I have the pleasure of recording my gratitude to Karen Gardela for the research assistance she provided in the course of this project. Whether it was in searching for additional examples or details of commando raids or in helping to compile and make sense of the myriad of statistics pertaining to those raids, her assistance was invaluable. I also benefited from the suggestions and insightful points raised by the reviewer of this Note, Alan Vick, whose comments significantly improved an earlier version of the study. Finally, I am indebted to Janet DeLand for her skillful editing and masterful smoothing of rough edges.



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I. INTRODUCTION

This Note analyzes the results of 100 commando raids carried out by small organized military forces or irregular paramilitary groups between 1946 and 1983.¹ Its purpose is to assess the effectiveness of clandestine military operations staged by small-size raiding parties during ostensibly peacetime situations, and their potential utility as a component of U.S. military policy for responding to terrorist attacks and/or provocations. The study seeks to determine the contribution of various factors to the success or failure of a raid: the geographical distance between the raiding party's staging area and its objective, the previous training of the raiders, the size of the raiding party, the method of transportation used, the objective of the raid, and the use of disguise and deception.

BACKGROUND

The 1983 and 1984 bombings of the United States embassies in West Beirut and Kuwait, the Marine headquarters in Beirut, and the new embassy complex in East Beirut have focused renewed attention on the threat posed by international terrorism to U.S. interests, citizens, and government and military personnel. The bombings have raised the question of what military options U.S. policymakers should consider for responding to terrorist acts.

In testimony before the Long Commission investigating the bombing of the Marine headquarters and in a 1983 study entitled *New Modes of Conflict*,² Brian Jenkins argued that we may be on the threshold of an era of armed conflict in which limited conventional warfare, classical guerrilla warfare, and international terrorism will coexist, with both government and subnational entities employing them individually, interchangeably, sequentially, or simultaneously. If this prognosis is

¹The raids analyzed in this study are listed and briefly described in the Appendix.

²Brian Michael Jenkins, *New Modes of Conflict*, The Rand Corporation, R-3009-DNA, June 1983.

correct, the U.S. military will be required to maintain capabilities for defending against all three modes of conflict and--perhaps, with the exception of terrorism--waging them as well.

Moreover, the United States may once again find itself involved in a situation similar to that in Lebanon, where local governments will be unable to deal effectively with terrorists who threaten or attack American interests, personnel, or citizens. Hence, it may become necessary for the United States to respond to repeated terrorist attacks by retaliating against either the terrorist groups or their patron states, or both. State-sponsorship of terrorism³ increases the need for--and problems of--military reprisal. Accordingly, state-supported terrorism will require increased intelligence efforts, new approaches for obtaining proof of links between the patron-state and its client, and justification for retaliation.

The use of military force may be called for in some cases. The climate of domestic opinion may encourage or even demand such a response, but growing public opposition to U.S. involvement in protracted armed conflict (and the concomitant fear that a limited operation may escalate into a full-fledged war) may militate against traditional applications of force or projections of power.

Hence small-scale military operations such as those considered in this study may prove to be an effective adjunct to the U.S. military capability for retaliation against terrorism.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, "commando raids" are defined as small-scale attacks carried out by small groups behind enemy lines, using stealth and rapid mobility to achieve their missions. The 100 raids considered here are those for which information was available on the objective, the size of the raiding party, the means of transportation used, and the geographical distance involved. We have attempted to achieve a balance of irregular-force and elite-unit operations, so that we could realistically evaluate their relative effectiveness. In several cases, the number of raiders was estimated, based on similar raids for which relevant data were available.

³For example, Syrian and/or Iranian involvement is suspected in the three bombings of U.S. diplomatic and military installations in Lebanon.

The objectives of the raids reviewed here include the destruction of specific enemy installations, the rescue of hostages, the execution of simple harassing or stand-off attacks, and the abduction or assassination of designated persons. Six key factors involved in such operations are analyzed:

1. Previous training of the personnel involved in the mission (whether they were members of elite, highly trained, national military forces, ad hoc teams assembled for specific missions, irregular guerrilla fighters, or urban terrorists).
2. The geographical location from which the raiding parties embarked on their mission, i.e., whether the mission was *indigenous* (within the raiding parties' own country), *cross-border* (within the territory of a neighboring state), or *international* (across the boundaries of several other countries).
3. The methods of transportation employed to infiltrate and withdraw the assault units.
4. The character of the mission (destruction, stand-off assault, rescue, kidnap, or assassination).
5. The size of the raiding party.
6. The use of disguise and/or deception.

We have limited our study to the post-World War II period, because of the significant changes in warfare that have occurred since 1945. In *Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, David Wood reports that of the 127 armed conflicts that have taken place between 1900 and 1967, nearly two-thirds (83 percent) have occurred since 1945.⁴ Moreover, these conflicts have been accompanied by a new type of warfare, international terrorism. For nearly two decades, terrorists have exported their grievances into the international arena, with airline hijackings, embassy seizures, and other transnational attacks.

⁴David Wood, *Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Papers, No. 48, June 1968.

Wars often are no longer formally declared, but armed conflicts are fought nonetheless; and at the same time, states are often constrained by bipolar alliances, superpower hegemony, or international opinion from making full military responses to attacks or provocations.

The time period considered here excludes formal, declared wars and concentrates on periods of ostensible peace, where the need for military operations has been apparent nonetheless and where the role of commando raids has changed significantly.

COMMANDO ORIGINS

The term "commando" originated in the late nineteenth century in South Africa, where it was used to denote

a party commanded or called out for military purposes; an expedition or raid: a word applied in South Africa to quasi-military expeditions of Portuguese or the Dutch Boers.⁵

Such operations obviously existed long before that Afrikaans-associated appellation was devised, but it was during the Boer War⁶ of 1899-1902 that the name was first applied.

During that conflict, irregular Boer units faced a numerically superior, better armed, better supplied British Army. By 1902, 250,000 British troops had been dispatched to South Africa to fight some 25,000 Boer men-at-arms, but a decisive military victory remained unattainable. After a series of initial setbacks, the Boer commanders realized that they could never hope to defeat the British in conventional warfare. Therefore, they sought to wear down their less-mobile, conventionally organized opponents through debilitating "hit-and-run" attacks and harassing assaults. By living off the land, carrying only what they needed on their backs or slung from their saddles and therefore remaining highly mobile, the commandos could compensate for their numerical inferiority and effectively tie down large numbers of British

⁵*The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1971.

⁶Boers were the descendants of the Dutch settlers in the Transvaal and Orange Free States of present-day South Africa.

troops, bait ambushes, or involve the the British in debilitating searches. In his study of that war, Thomas Pakenham relates:

In this commando system ... if the enemy were superior in numbers, they would provoke the enemy's attack, dismount, take cover and shoot, remount and ride away.... Indeed, the commando system was best suited not to large-scale, set piece battles, but to smaller-scale, guerrilla strikes. A smaller group could make better use of their best asset, mobility.⁷

Frustrated by the Boers' ability to thwart a final resolution of the war, the British eventually employed the same tactics (albeit on a limited scale). Special, small anti-commando mobile forces, including the Bush Veldt Carbineers, were organized by Lord Kitchener, the British commander, to fight the Boers, using their own tactics.⁸ At the end of the war, the special anti-commando squads were disbanded and the idea of maintaining elite, mobile units was abandoned. But the lesson of the Boer War is clear: One must be prepared to adapt to the enemy by operating the same way that he does. The idea of using commando units was subsequently revived by the British during World War II, within days of the fall of France.

BRITISH COMMANDO OPERATIONS DURING WORLD WAR II

On June 4, 1940--just 48 hours after the last British troops had been evacuated from Dunkirk--Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, directed his Chief of Staff, General Ismay, to raise a special unit of raiders to carry out "hit-and-run" attacks against German forces then occupying the far side of the English Channel. The commandos, Churchill believed, would fill two important roles: They would prevent the British from falling into the "defensive habit of mind which had ruined the French"⁹ by striking back, if only with harassing blows, keeping the Germans off-guard, disrupting their invasion

⁷Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, Random House, New York, 1979, pp. 105, 348.

⁸Ibid., p. 571.

⁹Winston Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, The Reprint Society, London, 1949, p. 204.

preparations, and tying down large numbers of troops on static defensive duties. In addition, the commandos would provide a needed boost to morale by keeping alive the "offensive spirit" of the routed British Army.¹⁰ "An effort must be made," Churchill told Ismay, "to shake off the mental and moral prostration to the will of the enemy from which we suffer."¹¹

Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Clarke, an officer well-acquainted with the ability of small, mobile bands of irregular forces to defeat larger, conventionally deployed and equipped regular troops by dint of his service in Palestine during the 1936-1939 Arab Rebellion, was chosen to lead the new unit, which he called the "Commandos."¹² He solicited volunteers of strong physical and mental character from among the men who had recently participated in the abortive invasion of Norway,¹³ and within three weeks Commandos 1 and 2 had been formed.¹⁴ Under the system instituted by Clarke, the Commando teams

were designed to be complete units in themselves, and to be contained in a ship which was to be their home and floating base. They could thus be moved almost anywhere at very short notice and in a comparatively short time. They were trained to dispense with normal methods of supply. They were not to depend on the Quartermaster, but were to be, as far as possible, self-contained.¹⁵

This system was subsequently adapted to the needs of British land-based special units as well (as discussed below).

¹⁰*Combined Operations: The Official Story of the Commandos*, London, Macmillan, 1943, p. 4.

¹¹Churchill, op. cit., p. 205.

¹²*Combined Operations*, p. 4.

¹³Later, Commando recruits were drawn primarily from the Royal Marines.

¹⁴Mark Herman, "Raid: Commando Operations in the 20th Century," *Strategy and Tactics*, No. 64, September-October 1977, p. 4.

¹⁵*Combined Operations*, p. 5.

Just 19 days after Churchill's directive to Ismay, the Commandos were thrown into action. Their mission was to capture German prisoners and bring them back to England for interrogation. Although they failed to accomplish this mission, their successful infiltration and safe return demonstrated the practicality of using small, highly mobile units for operations behind enemy lines. Their second mission, attempted on July 14, was an even worse failure, as the boats conveying the raiding parties inadvertently landed far from the site of the objective.¹⁶ Four days later, however, a small team of Commandos destroyed the hydroelectric plant at Glomfjord, Norway.

The Commandos later carried out a number of significant operations, including:

- The destruction of a vital aqueduct in southwest Italy by 38 airborne troops on February 10, 1940 (the Commandos were captured, however, before they could be evacuated by sea).
- An attempt to capture or assassinate Field Marshal Erwin Rommel at his Libyan headquarters staged by 59 Commandos who were landed on the coast by submarine. They failed to accomplish their objective (Rommel was away from his headquarters), and only two men returned from the mission.
- A raid on a German radar station at Bruneval, France, on February 27, 1942, when 119 commandos parachuted into France and successfully acquired and brought back to Britain sophisticated German radar equipment. The force was evacuated by sea, with losses of two killed, seven wounded, and six missing.
- The destruction of a German naval signaling station on an island in the English Channel, and the capture of secret codebooks on September 2, 1942, by a 12-man commando team that sustained only one minor casualty.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 18-24.

¹⁷Herman, op. cit., p. 5.

- Another attack on the Glomfjord station on September 20, 1942, by two small units (fewer than 10 each), repeating the previous year's success (although two officers were captured).
- A glider-borne raid by 30 Commandos against a heavy-water plant in Vermonk, Norway, on November 19, 1942, which failed due to crash-landings of the gliders that resulted in the capture and execution of the entire raiding party.
- The destruction of a strategically important iron pyrite mine in Lillelo, Norway, on January 23, 1943, by 104 Commandos who were landed on the Norwegian coast by boat, sustaining only one death and several minor injuries.
- The destruction of the same heavy-water plant at Vermonk (which had recommenced operations) by eight British-trained Norwegian commandos on February 27, 1943.

The success of the Commandos spawned other, similar types of elite units in the British Army, including the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG), formed in June 1940, and the Special Air Service (SAS), founded by ex-Commando Lt. Col. David Stirling in July 1941. Both units operated primarily in North Africa, executing such significant operations as the following:

- On October 31, 1940, 32 members of the LRDG traveling a distance of 1100 km by truck attacked a strategically important Italian fort in southern Libya. The operation was successful, and the raiders returned to their base in Cairo.
- Two groups of 76 LRDG men left Cairo on December 26, 1940, in 24 jeeps and trucks and arrived at their objective, the Italian garrison at Murzuk, Libya, 16 days later. While one group attacked a nearby airfield, destroying three planes, the other assaulted the fort, inflicting casualties on 30 of its Italian defenders. British losses were two killed and five wounded.
- Five German airfields in Libya were attacked by five separate SAS teams of parachutists (totaling 62 men). This first operation staged by the SAS was a disaster because of missed

drop zones and lost supplies. However, all but 22 men returned to base.

- On December 21, 1941, a combined team of SAS and LDRG raiders traveling by truck destroyed 23 aircraft at an isolated German base in the Libyan Desert.
- Fifty-four SAS men distributed among 18 jeeps drove 64 km to attack a German airfield in Libya on July 26, 1942. Twenty-five aircraft were destroyed and 12 were damaged. The British lost one man and three jeeps.
- Two 30-man LDRG units traveled a circuitous 1500-km route to attack an Italian airfield in the Libyan desert. The raid, which took place on September 13, 1942, destroyed 20 aircraft and damaged 12 others. The LDRG suffered no casualties during the raid itself but were attacked several times while returning to their base, and in the process 10 of them were captured and six wounded.

Of the 19 operations mounted by British special forces, 14 were successful (in three instances, however, substantial casualties were sustained or the safe withdrawal of the raiders was foiled). Five operations failed because of faulty intelligence or poor training; in two cases, the raiders failed to even reach their targets. Of 10 cross-border operations, 60 percent succeeded and 40 percent failed; of 9 international operations, 77 percent succeeded and 23 percent failed.

As Table 1 shows, land vehicles delivered the raiders to their objective and brought them safely home in seven of the successful missions; surface naval craft succeeded in four missions; and one parachute assault team was recovered by boats. In the qualified successes (when evacuation transport failed), teams were successfully infiltrated once each by airdrop, truck, and submarine; they failed to reach two submarine evacuation rendezvous, and they failed once to return to base by truck. One of the failures was the result of poor intelligence; two were the result of inadequate training; in one case, the two gliders carrying the attack team crashed; and one parachute raiding party was dropped too far from the target.

Table 1

EFFECT OF TRANSPORTATION USED BY BRITISH UNITS
ON MISSION OUTCOMES

Vehicle Type	Mission Outcome		Percent Successful
	Successes	Failures	
Truck	7	0	100
Boat	4	0	100
Submarine	1	1	50
Aircraft (military)	1	1	50

II. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMANDO RAIDS

Of the 100 raids considered in this study, 77 percent were successful. This high success rate demonstrates that obstacles such as geographic distance and well-defended enemy positions can be overcome by small paramilitary and military units which operate with stealth and mobility.

LEVEL OF TRAINING

The level of training of the attack forces was a significant determinant of the success of their operations. Irregular forces carried out 51 missions and had a success rate of 66 percent, while elite units undertook 49 operations and had a success rate of 88 percent. Well-trained, better armed and supported regular units from standing national military forces clearly possess an overall advantage over irregular guerrilla and terrorist forces. At the same time, however, irregular forces may possess certain advantages over their elite counterparts. They are often compelled to compensate for their lack of firepower, their unsophisticated weaponry, and their haphazard logistical support with innovation and expertise--serving as an example to regular and elite units of how stealth, surprise, and mobility can compensate for inferiority of numbers, firepower, or weaponry.

GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Indigenous raids (operations occurring within a limited geographic region that is familiar to the commando forces) had the highest success rate: 94 percent of the indigenous raids were successful (see Table 2). In these cases, there was little difference between the irregular and elite-unit success rates. The irregulars accomplished their objectives in 91 percent of their raids, while the elite units recorded a flawless 100 percent. Indigenous raids have a high probability of success, not only because of the raiders' familiarity with their surroundings, but also because there are far fewer problems of reconnaissance, intelligence-gathering, logistics, and transportation than are encountered in longer-range operations.

Table 2
EFFECT OF GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON MISSION OUTCOMES

Attack Type	Mission Outcomes		Percent Successful
	Successes	Failures	
Total Attacks			
Indigenous	16	1	94
Cross-border	53	17	76
International	8	5	61
Attacks by Irregular Forces			
Indigenous	10	1	91
Cross-border	19	15	56
International	4	1	80
Attacks by Elite Units			
Indigenous	5	0	100
Cross-border	34	2	94
International	4	4	50

Cross-border raids (relatively short-distance forays across contiguous international boundaries) had a less dramatic, but nonetheless significant success rate, 76 percent. Elite forces were successful 94 percent of the time, while irregular forces had only a 56 percent success rate. Eleven of 15 failed raids by irregular forces were staged by Palestinian terrorists, three by anti-Castro Cuban guerrillas, and one by an ad hoc group of American and Laotian mercenaries.

The failures of the Palestinian missions must be viewed within the unique context of their particular struggle. Palestinian terrorists dispatched from Lebanon and Jordan to Israel often had no more specific objective in mind than to murder Israeli civilians, mine roads, or destroy property. Their goal frequently was simply to foment a general atmosphere of fear and alarm in Israel and to draw attention to the Palestinian cause. Many of these operations were designed primarily to

enhance the stature and "action-oriented" reputation of one terrorist group over its rivals. In addition, three of the Palestinian failures were the direct result of unorthodox modes of transportation: hot-air balloons in two instances and an ultralight, single-seat aircraft in the other. Two of the three failed anti-Castro Cuban missions may be ascribed to the difficulties of penetrating a well-defended island police state and the inherent disadvantages of small paramilitary groups lacking detailed intelligence and logistical support. By the same token, a third failure involved a somewhat bizarre plan to kidnap Soviet military advisors alleged to be in Cuba. Finally, a scheme to rescue 120 Vietnam-era American servicemen believed to be imprisoned in Laos was attempted by an assortment of U.S. Vietnam veterans and Laotian mercenaries operating under sketchy and unconfirmed information regarding the location, and even the existence, of the alleged POWs.

International operations (raids mounted over long distances in entirely alien and hostile surroundings) had the lowest success rate, 60 percent. The vast distances involved in such missions often pose operational, logistical, and intelligence problems that are insurmountable. It is interesting to note that in international operations, irregular forces experienced greater success (80 percent) than elite units (50 percent). Differences in the nature of the missions undertaken by the two groups, however, explain the disparity. Whereas most of the irregular forces' missions were terrorist attacks, sabotage, or barricade-and-hostage operations, the elite forces' missions were generally considerably more difficult and complex.

The irregular forces' four international successes were all achieved by Palestinian terrorists. The goal in two of these incidents was to seize hostages with which to bargain for the release of imprisoned comrades; one mission was to murder civilian air travelers at Israel's Lod Airport; and the other involved the destruction of an oil pipeline in Italy. The lone irregular-force failure was a bungled coup attempt in the Seychelles staged by a ragtag collection of South African and Rhodesian mercenaries.

The elite units were successful in one assassination mission (the murder of a Palestinian terrorist in France by Israeli *Mossad* operatives) and in three complicated, international rescue operations

(at Entebbe, Mogadishu, and Bangkok). It should be emphasized, however, that two of the three rescue operations (Mogadishu and Bangkok) were carried out in "permissive" environments, where the raiders enjoyed the complete support and cooperation of the local government. International raids in hostile environments had a considerably lower success rate, 33 percent. This should be an important consideration to government officials and military planners contemplating long-distance rescue operations across international boundaries. Without the cooperation of the local government, the chances of success are poor. The few rescue operations that have succeeded without such cooperation were all characterized by meticulous planning, sophisticated logistical support, detailed intelligence, and--a less tangible factor--the attainment of surprise.

Poor intelligence accounted for two of the four failures recorded by elite units (the attempts by American forces on the Son Tay prisoner-of-war camp in North Vietnam and on Cambodia's Koh Tang Island). Inadequate planning accounted for the third failure (the Egyptian debacle on Cyprus), and mechanical problems for the fourth (the U.S. debacle at "Desert One" in Iran). Clearly, meticulous planning and detailed intelligence considerably enhance the chances of succeeding on a mission.

TRANSPORTATION

Land vehicles (trucks and jeeps) had the highest rate of success of all the vehicle types used by raiding parties to travel to and from their targets (see Table 3). Land vehicles successfully transported their passengers to *and from* their objectives in all of the raids in our sample in which they were used. This parallels the high success rates experienced in indigenous and cross-border raids. Indeed, of the 18 operations involving land vehicles, seven were indigenous raids (all staged by irregular forces) and 11 were cross-border operations (all carried out by elite units).

Helicopters had a success rate of 89 percent. In only one of 18 operations employing helicopter-borne forces did a helicopter fail to deliver its passengers to the designated landing zone (the U.S. attempt to rescue American hostages held in Iran). The other failure involving

Table 3

EFFECT OF TRANSPORTATION TYPE ON MISSION OUTCOMES

Transportation Type	Mission Outcomes		Percent Successful
	Successes	Failures	
Total Attacks			
Truck	18	0	100
Helicopter	16	2	89
Aircraft (commercial)	6	1	86
Aircraft (military)	4	1	80
Boat	18	5	78
Foot	15	6	71
Hot-air balloon	0	2	0
Ultralight aircraft	0	1	0
Attacks by Irregular Forces			
Truck	7	0	100
Helicopter	2	0	100
Aircraft (commercial)	4	1	80
Boat	15	5	75
Foot	9	6	60
Hot-air balloon	0	2	0
Ultralight aircraft	0	1	0
Attacks by Elite Units			
Truck	11	0	100
Foot	6	0	100
Boat	4	0	100
Aircraft (commercial)	2	0	100
Helicopter	14	2	87
Aircraft (military)	4	1	80

helicopters was the attempted rescue mounted by U.S. Marines at Koh Tang Island. Two helicopter operations were indigenous (the escape attempts of inmates at a Michigan and a Mexican prison, both made by irregular forces), 13 were cross-border (all by elite forces--10 Israeli, two Rhodesian, and one South African), and three were international (all by the United States). Although in two of the three international raids mounted by helicopter-borne troops, infiltration and withdrawal were

accomplished successfully, all three raids failed, owing in two cases to inadequate intelligence (the U.S. rescue attempts at Son Tay prison camp and Koh Tang Island) and in one to a refueling accident.

Commercial aircraft were used only in international operations (three operations by Palestinian terrorists, two by an elite Israeli *Mossad* team, and one by South African and Rhodesian mercenaries). Although all of these teams reached their destinations, in only two instances--the Israeli assassination of Abu Hassan in Beirut in 1979 and the Palestinian seizure of the Israeli embassy in Bangkok in 1972--were the teams able to leave the country the same way they entered (a 43 percent success rate). In two instances, commercial aircraft delivered the raiding party to its destination but failed to evacuate it (the assault at Lod Airport in 1972 and the kidnapping of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic games). South African and Rhodesian mercenaries were able to land in the Seychelles, but their planned coup was foiled when weapons were discovered in their hand luggage and a shootout with airport guards ensued.

Military air transport, employed by organized armed forces in four international and one cross-border operation, had a success rate of 80 percent. All the successes were rescue operations (three international and one cross-border): the Israeli rescue of 139 hostages held by Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorists at Entebbe, the West German rescue of hostages seized aboard a Lufthansa jet hijacked to Mogadishu, the assault staged by Indonesian commandos against a hijacked aircraft in Bangkok, and a cross-border raid on a prison camp in Zambia by Rhodesian Selous Scouts.

Unlike the West German and Indonesian rescue teams, the Israelis at Entebbe and the Selous Scouts in Zambia did not have the support of the governments in whose territory the commandeered aircraft had landed. Although this factor did not affect the outcomes of these raids, it had disastrous consequences when an elite Egyptian force stormed a Cyprus Airways plane containing 30 passengers. The aircraft had been seized at Larnaca (Cyprus) Airport by two Palestinian terrorists after they had assassinated a noted Egyptian journalist, who was also a close friend of President Anwar Sadat. The Egyptian commandos, whose objective was to capture or kill the terrorists--the safety of the hostages being only an

ancillary objective--stormed the plane without informing the Cypriot government of their intentions. The surprise assault, however, was a complete debacle: Cypriot troops and a special team of Palestinian commandos dispatched by Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasir Arafat opened fire on the Egyptians and foiled the operation.

Seaborne raids, all but one of which were cross-border operations, had a success rate of 78 percent. However, the irregular forces were successful only 68 percent of the time. The elite units fared much better: All nine of the elite-unit operations employing seacraft were successful. Of 20 operations mounted by irregular forces, only 15 were successful. The successes were ten anti-Castro Cuban raids on Cuba, four Palestinian operations, and an attack by Nicaraguan *Contras*. Four of the five failures involved Palestinian terrorists attempting to infiltrate Israel after traveling south from Lebanon, and one involved anti-Castro Cubans. The elite units' successes were three Israeli cross-border raids and an indigenous raid by the United States on a Viet Cong prison camp in South Vietnam.

Operations carried out by raiding parties traveling on foot had a 71 percent success rate. Once again, there was a large disparity between the irregular forces and elite units: The former had a success record of 60 percent, whereas the latter had a perfect 100 percent record. The necessity for armed men to pass through hostile territory on foot restricted these operations to either indigenous or cross-border geographic dimensions. There were four indigenous missions (one by the Jewish *Irgun* and three by the *Palmach*), and all were successful in terms of getting the raiding parties to and from their targets (one mission failed due to a humanitarian evacuation warning transmitted by a *Palmach* unit to the intended target, facilitating the defusing of the explosives that had previously been planted). Five cross-border failures involved Palestinians attempting to enter Israel, and one was an abortive attempt by American and Laotian mercenaries seeking to rescue U.S. servicemen from Laos. Three of the elite units' successes were accomplished by Israeli forces and three by Rhodesian Selous Scouts.

Finally, highly unorthodox means of transport--the aforementioned hot-air balloon and ultralight-aircraft infiltrations attempted by Palestinian terrorists--were complete failures: None of the raiders succeeded in reaching their objectives.

TYPES OF OPERATIONS

The type of operation most frequently attempted by both irregular and elite forces was sabotage and destruction. Such operations were successful 88 percent of the time; the irregular forces had a 79 percent success rate, while the elite forces had a 96 percent rate (see Table 4). Although the *immediate* goal of both types of raiding parties in these missions was the destruction of some specific enemy facility or installation, the ancillary goals of the irregular and elite forces were often quite different. The underlying *raison d'être* of the irregular forces was obtain a nationalist, e.g., political, goal. The *Irgun*, *Palmach*, *Lehi*, Palestinian and Irish groups, anti-Castro Cubans, and Nicaraguan *Contras* employed terrorism and guerrilla warfare to undermine the authority and security of their opponents and to draw attention to, and obtain publicity for, their cause, i.e., the liberation of their respective nations. Thus, their destruction and sabotage missions were conceived to have nonmilitary as well as military effects.

Although the primary objective of the elite-unit missions in our sample was also the destruction of enemy installations, a secondary objective was often retaliation and reprisal for some previous terrorist provocation or for actual acts of terrorist violence. Most of the 21 Israeli operations and at least two of the three South African operations were directed at the civilian property or military assets of neighboring countries that were tacitly encouraging or actively supporting the terrorists whose actions prompted the military response. The high rate of success in these operations was in part due to the fact that all but one (the sabotage of an oil pipeline by Palestinian terrorists in Italy in 1972) were either indigenous or cross-border in geographical scope.

Rescue missions were the next most common type of operation. Six rescue missions were carried out by irregular forces, with a success rate of 83 percent; nine were carried out by elite units, who had a success rate of 69 percent. The nature of these rescue missions, however, differed for the two types of forces. The irregular forces generally mounted their operations to free imprisoned comrades held in the security facilities or the prisons of their opponents (e.g., the

Table 4
EFFECT OF TYPE OF OPERATION ON MISSION OUTCOMES

Type of Operation	Mission Outcomes		Percent Successful
	Successes	Failures	
Total Attacks			
Seizure of assets	3	0	100
Assassination	3	0	100
Destruction/sabotage	45	6	88
Rescue	14	5	74
Barricade & hostage	6	2	75
Kidnapping	4	2	66
Terrorism	3	7	30
Coup	0	1	0
Attacks by Irregular Forces			
Seizure of assets	1	0	100
Rescue	5	1	83
Destruction/sabotage	19	5	79
Barricade & hostage	6	2	75
Terrorism	3	7	30
Kidnapping	0	1	0
Coup	0	1	0
Attacks by Elite Units			
Seizure of assets	2	0	100
Assassination	3	0	100
Destruction/sabotage	26	1	96
Kidnapping	4	1	80
Rescue	9	4	69

successful attacks by the *Irgun* at the Acre fortress/prison in Palestine in 1947, the two raids against Mexican prisons, and the raids on an American and a Ugandan jail). The one failed operation was the aforementioned attempt by American and Laotian mercenaries to free Vietnam-era American POWs believed to be held in Laos. Five of the successes were either indigenous or cross-border; the lone failure was a cross-border effort.

In only three instances--the successful rescue of American POWs from a Viet Cong prison camp in the Mekong Delta in 1970, the failed operation to free American POWs from the Son Tay prisoner-of-war camp in North Vietnam in 1972, and the Rhodesian Selous Scouts' raid on a prison camp in Zambia--was the goal to liberate incarcerated comrades-in-arms. The remaining 11 operations were carried out to free civilian (and, in some cases, a few military) hostages seized by terrorists or hostile governments. Five of the nine successes were indigenous rescue operations (the Mekong Delta raid, the Israeli assault of a commercial aircraft hijacked to Tel Aviv's Lod Airport in 1972, the two simultaneous operations carried out by Dutch Marines in 1977 against a hijacked train and a seized schoolhouse, and the British SAS attack on Arab terrorists barricaded in the Iranian embassy in London in 1980), one was cross-border (the Selous Scouts operation), and three were international (the Entebbe, Mogadishu, and Bangkok rescues).

All four of the failures were international operations (the U.S. Son Tay, Koh Tang, and Desert One raids and the Egyptian debacle at Larnaca, Cyprus). It appears that indigenous rescue operations have a greater chance of success than international operations, because indigenous operations have fewer transportation, logistical, intelligence, and communications problems. Also, ad hoc, complex rescue or assault units have less chance of success than self-contained, elite units, such as those employed by the Israelis, British, and West Germans.

The remaining types of operations are not likely to be undertaken by U.S. military forces in the future. It is worth noting, however, that the three assassinations of terrorists by clandestine state operatives (the Israeli *Mossad* missions against Palestinian "Black September" leaders) were all international and all successful. By the same token, 66 percent of the kidnapping missions succeeded, with elite forces successful in four out of five operations (all cross-border missions by the Selous Scouts).

SIZE OF RAIDING PARTIES

Because of the varying nature of commando operations, it is impossible to determine an ideal raiding party size. It is, however, possible to make some general observations as to what size party was most successful in the missions considered here, and what size was least.

Strike forces composed of 25 to 50 men attempted 13 raids and had a 100 percent record of success (see Table 5). Forces of 15 to 25 men undertook 8 raids and had a success rate of 81 percent. In both size categories, the irregular and elite forces had identical records (elite units carried out 13 of the 15 operations by 25-to-50-man groups, while the numbers of missions by irregular and elite forces were equal in the 15-to-25-man category). Parties of 50 to 100 men succeeded in 80 percent of the 5 operations they undertook (all were executed by elite forces). Groups numbering between 5 and 15 raiders had a 77 percent success record in 18 missions (the four small-group operations undertaken by elite units were all successful, and the irregular forces were successful in 75 percent of their efforts). Large forces (200 or more) had a 75 percent success rate in four missions, all carried out by elite units. At the other end of the spectrum, teams of 1 to 5 raiders, who carried out the largest number of raids (23), succeeded in only 61 percent of their operations. However, very small elite units had a perfect success record. The four missions launched by large forces (100 to 200 men) had the poorest success record, 25 percent.

This evidence suggests that medium-sized forces (15 to 50 men) have the best chance of accomplishing their missions, and raiding parties of 5 to 15 are only slightly less successful. Larger forces (more than 50 men) and very small forces (fewer than 5 men) are less likely to achieve their objectives. Of course, these conclusions may not be valid for special targets or missions.

Table 5
EFFECT OF RAIDING PARTY SIZE ON MISSION OUTCOMES

Number of Men	Mission Outcomes		Percent Successful
	Successes	Failures	
Total Attacks			
25-50	13	0	100
15-25	13	3	81
50-100	4	1	80
5-15	14	4	77
200+	3	1	75
1-5	14	9	61
100-200	1	3	25
Attacks by Irregular Forces			
25-50	2	0	100
15-25	6	2	75
5-15	12	4	75
1-5	12	9	57
100-200	0	1	0
Attacks by Elite Forces			
25-50	11	0	100
1-5	2	0	100
5-15	4	0	100
50-100	4	1	80
15-25	6	2	75
200+	3	1	75
100-200	1	2	33

THE ROLE OF DISGUISE AND DECEPTION

Perhaps the most significant conclusion to be drawn from this study is the crucial role that disguise and deception can play in the success of a mission. All of the 15 operations in this study that employed disguise and deception were successful. *Irgun* and *Lehi* forces that attacked three RAF aerodromes in Palestine in 1946 traveled undetected to their targets dressed as Arab, and later Jewish, field workers. An *Irgun* raiding party gained entrance to a well-defended British police

station disguised as policemen guarding a group of Arab prisoners. The *Irgun* raiders who bombed the King David Hotel were able to plant their bombs in the hotel's basement by pretending to be Arab workers delivering milk churns (in which the explosives were concealed). In a prison break engineered by the *Irgun* at Acre fortress, the group wore stolen British Army uniforms and traveled in stolen British Army vehicles. And the *Irgun* destroyed a British police headquarters in Haifa with a "barrel-bomb" disguised as an innocent piece of heavy machinery being transported atop an ordinary truck. Palestinian "Black September" terrorists easily gained entrance to a diplomatic reception held at the Israeli embassy in Bangkok dressed in black tie and looking like invited guests.

On nine occasions, elite units used disguise and deception to advantage. The Israeli reprisal raid on Beirut International Airport in 1968 was abetted by Israeli commandos dressed as Lebanese policemen. The rescue of a Sabena commercial aircraft hijacked to Israel's Lod Airport in 1972 by Palestinian terrorists was accomplished by Israeli commandos disguised as airplane mechanics. Surprise was gained at the outset of the Israeli Entebbe rescue when a black Mercedes limousine, identical to the one used by Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, but carrying Israeli commandos with blackened faces, pulled up to the door of the commandeered airline terminal. The Rhodesian Selous Scouts used disguises and deception to accomplish their objectives six times, wearing the uniforms of their enemies and disguising the vehicles they rode in so that they appeared to be those of their enemies.

III. COMMANDO WARFARE AND SMALL RAIDING PARTIES AS PART OF A COUNTERTERRORIST MILITARY POLICY

The basic conclusion of this study is that commando raids or "hit-and-run" operations undertaken by small (or relatively small), highly mobile forces may be an effective mode of warfare to counter, respond to, or perhaps even preempt terrorist provocation or attack. Seventy-seven of the 100 operations surveyed in this study were successful. Although the objectives of these operations varied greatly--from destruction or sabotage missions to rescues, from assassination of specific individuals to wholesale terrorist murder, from creating barricade-and-hostage situations to fomenting a military coup--they all had one thing in common: They were carried out by units of fewer than 200 men, in some cases with only one or two men. These small, often self-contained units were able to move more quickly and silently and in many instances were able to travel great distances and overcome well-defended or fortified installations.

The keys to waging this form of warfare appear to be:

- Striking the proper size balance: the force must be small enough to achieve maximum mobility and stealth, but large enough to accomplish its mission.
- The avoidance of confrontation with superior forces.
- Reliable means of transportation.
- Up-to-date, complete intelligence.
- Retention of an "offensive spirit."
- The flexibility, operational expertise, and creativity to employ surprise, deception, and disguise and to exploit the unexpected direct approach.

These factors can enable raiding parties to overcome their numerical inferiority, limited firepower, or unsophisticated weaponry. Admittedly, not all of the operations reviewed in this study are applicable to U.S. goals or compatible with defined military policy and

rules of engagement. For example, international operations--which the U.S. military would most likely be called upon to execute--had the lowest overall success rate (61 percent). Moreover, of the five successful operations achieved by elite military forces, two (the West German rescue mission at Mogadishu and the Indonesian rescue at Bangkok) occurred in "permissive" environments where the raiders enjoyed the support and cooperation of the country on whose soil the operations took place. When these two operations are excluded, the rate of success of elite forces declines significantly (to 33 percent).

Commando units were established by the British in 1940 as part of a plan to reverse the "defensive habit of mind" that had undermined the French Army at the start of World War II. The British Commandos, accordingly, were meant to serve a psychological as well as a practical purpose: to resuscitate the "offensive spirit" within the battered British military and provide a needed boost to civilian as well as military morale. In practical terms (in actual combat engagements), the Commandos were to operate with the objective of keeping the enemy off-balance, disrupting offensive preparations by harassing his lines of supply, and preoccupying and tying down large numbers of enemy troops.

This historical analogy, though not entirely applicable to the U.S. military today, nevertheless has some relevance. During the past two years, American personnel, property, and interests in the Middle East have been subjected to a series of sporadic, but excessively costly (in terms not only of lives lost and damage caused, but of U.S. prestige as well) attacks by fanatic, anti-Western Islamic terrorists. With each new attack, pressure has increased for the United States to take some action in response. Israel and France, which have also been the victims of suicide car and truck bombings by Islamic terrorists, retaliated with airstrikes against the terrorists' suspected bases and staging areas in Lebanon. The United States, however, except for a show of force when naval vessels belonging to the Sixth Fleet were dispatched to the coast of Lebanon after the bombing of the Marine barracks in October 1983, has not *directly* responded to any of these attacks with military force.¹

¹Although U.S. carrier-based fighter-bombers attacked Syrian anti-aircraft positions (after unarmed U.S. reconnaissance aircraft had been fired at) on December 4, 1983, and on December 13 and 14, the battleship *New Jersey* bombarded Syrian anti-aircraft positions (again for firing at

There are few military options for responding to terrorism. Moreover, in some cases, U.S. interests may be best served by not responding at all. To a certain degree, however, the U.S. military risks falling into the "defensive habit" of mind referred to by Churchill by being incapable of responding to terrorist attack or provocation. In addition, attempts by U.S. forces to mount difficult and complicated rescue missions in response to "state terrorism" against American citizens and diplomatic and military personnel have failed dismally and thus may also have contributed to a feeling of impotence and frustration among policymakers and military strategists.

This study suggests that the use of commando warfare and raids by small (and relatively small) groups of men may be one option for combatting state-supported terrorism. This type of military operation possesses a number of advantages:

- It involves the deployment of small numbers of men in a limited engagement.
- Potential missions are generally of short duration.
- Mobility, stealth, surprise, and the deliberate avoidance of direct contact (except when necessary) with larger forces allow casualties to the raiding party to be kept to a minimum.
- Small raiding parties can be successfully and speedily infiltrated into and withdrawn from their objectives.
- Small raiding parties can more easily be kept secret and thus can also be used a covert operations (this is particularly advantageous if a raid fails).

Given the continuing problem of state-sponsored terrorism and the reluctance of the American public to support sustained military operations that result in large numbers of U.S. casualties, commando warfare and raids by small (and relatively small) groups may be an

U.S. reconnaissance aircraft) and Druse artillery batteries situated around Beirut (that had previously shelled the U.S. Marine contingent at Beirut Airport--killing eight Marines), none of these actions were taken directly in response to terrorist attacks or provocations.

effective counterterrorist strategy. While domestic public opinion may initially encourage retaliatory or punitive action, support is unlikely to be sustained for any potentially prolonged involvement of U.S. combat forces abroad. Also, because of increasing public opposition to armed conflict in general, any use of American military power in circumstances that do not involve a direct attack on the United States itself or its traditional European allies may be questioned and debated.

It is widely agreed among policymakers, military planners, Congress, and the public that the United States should be adequately prepared to defend against and counter terrorism. Hence, the U.S. military must develop an array of low-cost responses that keep terrorist attacks from forcing the United States to escalate militarily but enable it to take some action against terrorist adversaries or their state patrons. Commando warfare has proven effective in accomplishing a wide range of missions, over considerable geographical distances, and employing different types of transportation. These types of operations may thus be a useful option for responding to terrorist attack or provocation.

Appendix

100 COMMANDO OPERATIONS, 1946-1983

JEWISH TERRORISTS

During the 1940s, two Jewish terrorist groups sought to end Great Britain's rule of Palestine: the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* (IZL), or National Military Organization, and the *Lohamei Herut Yisrael* (LHI), or Fighters for the Freedom of Israel, alias "The Stern Gang."

(1) IZL and LHI attacks on R.A.F. aerodromes at Lydda, Kfar Sarkin, and Qastina, Palestine, 25 February 1946: Indigenous operation; successful.

At the Qastina aerodrome, two truckloads of raiders, disguised at first as farmers and then later as Arab laborers riding atop fodder (which actually concealed weapons and explosives), quietly penetrated the airbase's defenses. They destroyed 8 planes (IZL claims the true number was 20) before escaping undetected. They withdrew on foot because of a standing curfew on all nighttime vehicle travel. Similar events occurred at Lydda and Kfar Sirkin. All of the attackers escaped unharmed, except for one who was killed by a British patrol while fleeing. Damage to the aircraft was estimated at 2 million pounds sterling.¹

(2) IZL Raid on police station, Ramat Gan, Palestine, 23 April 1946: Indigenous operation; successful.

An assault was staged by 10 to 15 men whose objective was to steal arms from the police station armory. The raiders traveled to their target in a stolen police truck and gained entrance to the station disguised as British policemen (in stolen uniforms) with Arab prisoners. The IZL team did not, however, neutralize all of the bona fide policemen, and an alarm was sounded. The raiders escaped in the stolen truck with 30 weapons and 7000 rounds of ammunition, but two of their party were killed and four were wounded. One of those wounded, the leader of the operation, was captured.²

¹J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1977, pp. 154-159.

²Ibid., pp. 160-161.

(3) IZL Bombing of the British Government Secretariat and Military Headquarters at the King David Hotel, Jerusalem, Palestine, 22 July 1946: Indigenous operation; successful.

The operation was carried out by a 14-man force disguised as Arab workers, who gained entrance to the hotel's basement by pretending to make a delivery. Explosives were concealed in seven milk cans. A small diversionary explosion was set just outside the hotel to draw attention from the raiders; nevertheless, two guards became suspicious of the supposed milk delivery and went down to the basement to investigate. They were shot to death by the IZL team, who then safely withdrew. In the ensuing explosion the entire wing of the hotel housing the British government and military offices was destroyed. Ninety-one persons were killed and 45 were injured.³

(4) IZL bombing of the British Officers' Club in Goldschmidt House, Jerusalem, Palestine, 1 March 1947: Indigenous operation; successful.

A stolen truck, packed with explosives, was rammed into a supposedly impenetrable, well-guarded military compound by the IZL raiders, who jumped clear before the truck crashed into the officers' club walls. The explosives were detonated, destroying the building, killing 20 British soldiers and wounding over 30.⁴

(5) IZL attack on Acre Prison-Fortress, Acre, Palestine: 4 May 1947: Indigenous operation; successful.

Thirty-four IZL men, dressed in stolen British Army uniforms and driving stolen British Army trucks, pulled up alongside the medieval crusader fort used as a prison by the British. Meanwhile, another team of IZL men, disguised as Arabs, positioned themselves as a covering force atop nearby rooftops. One of the trucks contained explosives that were detonated, causing a huge breach in the several-feet-thick fortress wall. The Jewish prisoners inside had already been briefed on what to do and set off a number of small diversionary explosions within the prison, using incendiary devices that had been smuggled in to them. In the confusion, 29 imprisoned IZL and LHI terrorists escaped, along with

³Ibid., pp. 169-173.

⁴Ibid., p. 190.

214 Arab prisoners. Although all of the Jewish prisoners fled safely, the IZL raiding party was caught by a nearby British Army unit. In the battle, 15 of the raiders were killed, 15 others were wounded, and four were taken prisoner. The success of the operation was a severe blow to British morale because the 140-man fortress had long been regarded as impenetrable.⁵

(6) IZL bombing of Police (Criminal Investigation Department) Headquarters, Haifa, Palestine, 29 September 1947: Indigenous operation; successful.

This attack was staged by two men in an ordinary truck that appeared to be transporting a large section of irrigation pipe. The section, however, was packed with explosives, and rubber tires were mounted on both ends. The pipe was placed on an inclined platform on the bed of the truck and driven in front of the headquarters. A cable was then released, allowing the "barrel bomb" to roll free of the truck, jump the barbed-wire fences surrounding the headquarters, and roll across the courtyard, coming to rest against the headquarters building. The bomb exploded, destroying the building, killing 10, and wounding 54. Both of the IZL saboteurs escaped unharmed.⁶

JEWISH PALMACH

The *Palmach*, the "shock troops" of Israel's pre-independence army, were created in 1942 and trained by the British in preparation for Rommel's capture of Egypt and subsequent invasion of Palestine. The *Palmach* were to serve as a rear-guard guerrilla force to harry and delay the advancing German *Afrika* Corps so that the British could withdraw. The organization was disbanded and incorporated into the Israeli Defense Force in 1949.

⁵Ibid., pp. 204-219.

⁶Ibid., p. 245.

(7) Raids on eleven bridges along Palestine Border, 17/18 June, 1946: Indigenous operation; successful.

Approximately 35 raiders participated in each of the eleven operations, traveling to and from their targets either by truck, by boat, or on foot. Ten of the bridges were destroyed or severely damaged. All of them were well-guarded, but through stealth, the *Palmach* men were able to sneak to and from them undetected, neither incurring nor causing any casualties. At the only bridge that was unsuccessfully attacked, one raider was killed by gunfire and 13 died when their explosive charge detonated prematurely.⁷

(8) Raid on Western radar installation, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Palestine, May 1947: Indigenous operation; failure.

This operation, staged by seven commandos assigned to destroy two British radar installations, was characterized by long-term reconnaissance and careful planning. Sites were penetrated and explosives laid. But a humanitarian telephone call, warning the British to evacuate the site before the explosions, allowed British sappers to defuse the bombs.⁸

(9) Raid on two radars, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Palestine, 20/21 July 1947: Indigenous operation; successful.

Two groups of approximately 22 men each penetrated the radar site from two sides and, after planting their explosive charges, safely withdrew (there was one minor casualty). Despite improved defenses installed following the previous (abortive) attack, the radar installations were destroyed.⁹

⁷Yigal Allon, *The Making of Israel's Army*, Bantam Books, New York, 1971, pp. 164-180.

⁸Ibid., pp. 184-189.

⁹Ibid., pp. 181-183.

ISRAELI OPERATIONS

In 1953, Unit 101 of the Israeli Defense Force was formed by Ariel Sharon (who later became Israel's Minister for Defense). The unit was composed of veterans of the 1948-1949 War of Independence who had left the army after the 1949 armistice. Under Sharon's command, Unit 101 acted as an irregular commando force, eschewing army uniforms and discipline, but operating with army support (most often from the paratroops). The unit was essentially a retaliatory force; its task was to end cross-border Arab terrorism by striking back at Israel's neighbors, using their own tactics. Eventually, Unit 101 was regrouped and completely integrated into the Israeli Army as a bona fide commando force. It has since grown into the world's most successful peacetime commando force. A special section of the *Mossad*, Israel's secret intelligence service, was organized after the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre to track down and kill the Palestinian Arab terrorists suspected of involvement in that operation.¹⁰ This special group called itself "The Wrath of God."

(10) Retaliatory raid on Khibye Village, Jordan, 14 October 1953: Cross-border operation; successful.

Forty members of Unit 101 crossed into Jordan on foot from Israel (supported by 63 paratroopers), surprising the village. Six of its inhabitants were killed, 45 were injured, and 45 houses were destroyed. None of the raiders were injured, and they safely withdrew.¹¹

(11) Attack on Egyptian Army staging bases at Sabha and Ras Siramiz, 2 November 1955: Cross-border operation; successful.

Approximately 300 men traveled 5 km into Egypt from the Israeli border on foot. Evading wandering Bedouins and members of the United Nations peacekeeping force, the Israelis completely surprised the Egyptians,

¹⁰For detailed accounts of this unit's operations see Michael Bar-Zohar and Eitan Haber, *The Quest for the Red Prince*, William Morrow, New York, 1983, and George Jonas, *Vengeance*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1984.

¹¹Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, *The Making of the Israeli Army*, Penguin Books, New York, 1975, p. 110.

killing 70 and taking 48 prisoner. In addition, a variety of weapons were captured, along with 3 trucks, 2 jeeps, 15 light trucks, 2 half-trucks, and 4 Bren-gun carriers. Six members of the raiding party were killed and 37 were wounded.¹²

**(12) Raid on transformer station and bridges, Nile River, Egypt
31 October 1968: Cross-border operation; successful.**

Helicopter-borne troops traveled 320 km into Egypt and destroyed two targets. All of the raiders returned to Israel safely.¹³

(13) Raid on two bridges in Jordan, 1 December 1968: Cross-border operation; successful.

A helicopter-borne force of Israeli commandos destroyed two bridges (a highway bridge and a railway bridge) 60 km inside Jordan. Israeli jet-fighters launched a diversionary attack against traffic on the Amman-Aqaba road which, according to the Jordanians, killed seven persons, wounded 11, and destroyed six cars.¹⁴

**(14) Raid on Beirut International Airport, 28 December 1968:
Cross-border operation; successful.**

A helicopter-borne assault was mounted in retaliation for the 26 December 1968 hijacking of an Israeli airliner by Palestinian terrorists. Eight helicopters ferried between 30 and 40 commandos to Beirut Airport from an undisclosed base in Israel. In only 45 minutes, the Israeli commandos destroyed 13 civilian aircraft belonging to three different Arab companies, causing damage estimated at \$43 million. While some of the commandos planted their explosive charges on the parked aircraft, others posing as Lebanese policemen cleared the tarmac of airport personnel and civilians. The force returned to Israel safely (two commandos were, however, wounded).¹⁵

¹²*Facts on File*, Facts on File, Inc., New York, November 3-9, 1955, p. 366.

¹³*Ibid.*, November 7-13, 1968, p. 46.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, November 28-December 4, 1968, p. 501.

¹⁵Donald E. Fink, "El Al Returning to Schedule After Arab Attack at Munich," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, February 24, 1969, pp. 29-30.

(15) Raid on bridges and power station in Egypt, 29 April 1969: Cross-border operation; successful.

Helicopter-borne forces traveled 320 km into Egypt. They damaged the Nag Hammadi Dam and bridge and the Idfu bridge, and destroyed two of the six electrical pylons at a power station near Luxor. No other details of the assault were made available.¹⁶

(16) Raid on electric power line at Sohag, Nile Valley, Egypt, 27 August 1969: Cross-border operation; successful.

Helicopter-borne forces approximately 300 km inside Egypt cut the electrical power line between the Aswan Dam and Cairo. No other details of the raid were furnished.¹⁷

(17) Raid on Egyptian Military Headquarters, Manqubad, Egypt, 28 August 1969: Cross-border operation; successful.

A force who were dropped and later picked up by helicopter mortared a target approximately 300 km inside of Egypt. No other details were made available.¹⁸

(18) Raid on suspected guerrilla staging base in Halta, Lebanon, 4 September 1969: Cross-border operation; successful.

An assault by 40 commandos traveling in two helicopters blew up 12 houses 3 km inside of Lebanon after clearing them of occupants. Five guerrillas were killed, and four commandos were wounded; all commandos were safely evacuated.¹⁹

(19) Raid on radar station at Ras Ghareb, Egypt, 26/27 December 1969: Cross-border operation; successful.

In a helicopter-borne raid to remove a low-level air defense radar system given to Egypt by the Soviet Union, the entire seven-ton radar station was taken back across the 24-km-wide Gulf of Suarez in two sections, one of which weighed four tons.²⁰

¹⁶*Facts on File*, May 1-7, 1969, p. 369.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, June 26-July 2, 1969, p. 399.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, September 4-10, p. 572.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰J.W.R. Taylor (ed.), *Jane's All the World's Aircraft, 1973-1974*, Jane's Yearbooks, London, 1974, pp. 47-48.

(20) Raid on Egyptian military base on Shadwan Island, Gulf of Suez, 22 January 1970: Cross-border operation; successful.

A helicopter assault was made on an Egyptian base that had observed and harassed Israeli shipping entering the Gulf of Eilat (Aqaba) and that also protected the larger Egyptian naval installation at Safafa. Four Israelis were killed during the assault, which lasted 30 hours. Seventy Egyptians were killed, and 62 were taken prisoner. The Israelis also removed and brought to Israel a British-built radar station used by the Egyptians.²¹

(21) Raid on Palestinian terrorist staging area at undisclosed site in Jordan, 5 March 1970: Cross-border operation; successful.

A small group of Israeli commandos crossed the Dead Sea into Jordan in small boats, killing three Palestinian terrorists and capturing three others. Israel claimed that the raid prevented the Palestinians from moving 130mm rockets into Israel for use against the settlements on the occupied West Bank.²²

(22) Raid on Aita es Shaab Village in Lebanon, 7 March 1970: Cross-border operation; successful.

A cross-border raid was made 1 mile into Lebanon by Israeli commandos traveling on foot. One Palestinian terrorist was killed, and five buildings were blown up. Israeli losses were one killed and three wounded.²³

(23) Raid on army camp and power line near Damascus, Syria, 15 March 1970: Cross-border operation; successful.

Helicopter-borne troops shelled an army camp 32 km north of Damascus and then cut a power line 19 km from Damascus, blacking out the city. Five Syrian soldiers were reported killed, and 14 were wounded. No information is available regarding Israeli losses.²⁴

²¹*Facts on File*, January 22-28, 1970, p. 30.

²²*Ibid.*, March 5-11, 1970, p. 140

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*, March 12-18, 1970, p. 30.

(24) Raid on two Palestinian terrorist bases at Yater and Kafr in Lebanon, 27 December 1971: Cross-border operation; successful.

An estimated 400 paratroopers crossed into Lebanon, killing 12 terrorists and one civilian and destroying four houses. Israeli casualties were 15 dead and five wounded.²⁵

(25) Rescue of hostages from hijacked aircraft at Lod Airport, Israel, 8 May 1972: Indigenous operation; successful.

Eighteen commandos disguised as mechanics, Red Cross officials, and released Palestinian prisoners stormed a Sabena aircraft held by four Black September terrorists. In less than 90 seconds, the commandos freed all 97 of the hostages on board. Two of the hijackers were killed, one was wounded, and the other was captured; three members of the assault team were wounded, as were five passengers. The assault had been practiced repeatedly on a similar aircraft.²⁶

(26) Assassination of Gassan Kanafani in Beirut, Lebanon, 9 July 1972: Cross-border operation; successful.

An unknown number of Israeli *Mossad* agents surreptitiously entered Lebanon to assassinate Gassan Kanafani, the reputed planner of the May 1972 Lod Airport massacre (incident 34 in this chronology), by planting a radio-triggered bomb in his car. Kanafani's niece, who was riding with him in the car, was also killed in the explosion. The operation was presumably the work of Israeli frogmen.²⁷

(27) Assassination of Mahmoud Hamshani in Paris, France, 8 December 1972: International operation; successful.

Mossad "Wrath of God" operatives gained entrance to the flat of Mahmoud Hamshani, the PLO and *Al Fatah* representative in Paris. They planted a small explosive device in the telephone receiver, waited until Hamshani's wife and child were out of the flat, then called the number. When Hamshani answered and identified himself, a high-pitched whine was sounded, triggering the small bomb that killed him.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Edward F. Mickolus, *Transnational Terrorism*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1980, pp. 313-316.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 331.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 364.

(28) Raid on the headquarters of Black September and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) in Beirut, Lebanon, 10 April 1973: Cross-border operation; successful.

Approximately 30 Israeli commandos who traveled north to Lebanon from Israel via boat were met at an isolated Beirut beach by six other Israelis who had entered the country sometime earlier on fake Latin American passports in order to reconnoiter the targets and arrange transportation for the commandos. Three cars brought to the beach by the agents carried the commandos into the city. In no more than 90 minutes, three guards were killed at the Black September offices and two at the PDFLP offices. In the course of the assault, 10 more Palestinian terrorists were killed. Israeli casualties were two dead and two wounded. Helicopters were standing by to evacuate the wounded and to assist the commando force's escape by dropping spikes and nails onto the road below. The commandos returned to Israel in the same boats that they had taken to Lebanon.²⁹

(29) Rescue of hostages on board hijacked Air France plane at Entebbe Airport, Uganda, 4 July 1976: International operation; successful.

Over 280 Israeli paratroops who traveled 2500 miles from Israel to Uganda in three Hercules C-130H transport planes rescued the 139 hostages held captive by 7 Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorists and an unknown number of Ugandan troops. The operation took only 90 minutes. A black Mercedes limousine, identical to the one used by Uganda's leader, Idi Amin, was driven from one of the C-130s toward the terminal where the hostages were held. Behind the limousine were several jeeps carrying other members of the raiding party. Their faces were blackened to make them look like Ugandan soldiers (it was also reported that a particularly fat paratrooper sat in the back of the Mercedes posing as Amin). Pulling up to the terminal, the paratroopers pushed inside, killing all seven of the hijackers. Two practice sessions had been held on an exact model of the Entebbe terminal before the rescue force left Israel, so everyone knew exactly what to do. As the freed hostages were being herded aboard the C-130s to take them to Israel, another force of Israeli paratroops was

²⁹Ibid., pp. 384-385.

placing explosive devices on a number of Ugandan MiGs to prevent any pursuit of the Israelis. Eleven planes were destroyed, and in the course of withdrawing, 20 Ugandan soldiers were killed and 13 were wounded. (Amin later claimed that there were 45 dead and 42 injured.) Only one of the Israeli paratroopers was killed and 11 were wounded. Two hostages died when the force first burst into the terminal.³⁰

**(30) Assassination of Abu Hassan in Beirut, Lebanon,
22 January 1979: Cross-border operation; successful**

A team of 14 Israeli "Wrath of God" agents secretly arrived in Beirut by way of an unknown third country to assassinate Hassan, the reputed "mastermind" of the 1972 Black September Munich Olympics massacre (incident 36 below). After careful reconnaissance, the Israeli agents planted 100 lb of explosives in a rented car which they then parked along the route taken by Hassan to work each day. When Hassan's car passed--carrying four bodyguards and followed by another car containing four more--a remote-control device concealed in the rented car was triggered, blowing up both cars and killing Hassan and the four bodyguards riding with him, as well as five passers-by; 18 others were injured. The Israeli team then slipped out of Beirut and returned safely to Israel.³¹

PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS

A number of Palestinian liberation groups have employed commando-type tactics in their war against Israel. During the 1950s and 1960s, these groups attacked on the hit-and-run, guerrilla pattern. *Fedayeen* (Arabic for "sacrificers") sneaked across the borders from either Egypt, Jordan, Syria, or Lebanon to attack isolated Israeli settlements or ambush Israeli army patrols. In the late 1960s and 1970s, however, the Palestinians changed their tactics and undertook more spectacular operations in order to attract attention to their cause. The battlefield was no longer restricted to Israel, as groups like *Al Fatah*, the PFLP, the PDFLP, and Black September brought their war outside both Israel and the Middle East, striking in Europe and Asia as well.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 621-625.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 823-824.

(31) PFLP sabotage of trans-Arabia pipeline in Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, 30 May 1969: Cross-border operation; failure.

In a cross-border operation, presumably from Jordan, on a heavily defended area of Israeli military occupation, an undisclosed number of Palestinian terrorists blew up a section of pipeline owned by Aramco, hoping that the oil would spill into the Sea of Galilee and poison Israel's main source of drinking water. Although the saboteurs were successful in damaging the pipe and causing a 14-hour fire, very little oil actually seeped into the water supply.³²

(32) PFLP sabotage of oil refinery in Haifa, Israel, 24 June 1969: Cross-border operation; successful.

Twenty-four terrorists planted a bomb within the heavily guarded facility, destroying a pipeline and causing a fire that lasted for 5 hours and consumed over 1,000 tons of oil. Telephone lines were severed by the explosion, and service was disrupted for 2 to 3 days throughout northern Israel.³³

(33) PFLP attack on Israel-bound ship in the Gulf of Eilat (Aqaba), 12 June 1971: Cross-border operation; successful.

Four men in a high-speed launch hit a Liberian freighter, the *Coral Sea*, with three bazooka shells. The freighter suffered little damage, and no crewmen were injured or killed. The launch escaped Israeli naval pursuit vessels and landed on the Yemeni coast.³⁴

(34) Japanese Red Army massacre of arrivals at Lod Airport, Israel, 30 May 1972: International operation; successful.

Three terrorists boarded a Tel Aviv-bound flight from Rome, after having traveled from Japan by way of Beirut. Upon collecting their luggage in the airport's arrival lounge, the terrorists pulled machine guns and hand-grenades from their bags and proceeded to attack other arriving passengers. Twenty-eight were killed and 76 wounded before one

³²Ibid., pp. 121-122.

³³Ibid., p. 124.

³⁴*Facts on File*, June 24-30, 1971, p. 488.

terrorist was killed by Israeli security forces, another accidentally killed himself, and the third was captured. The terrorists had undertaken the operation at the behest of the PFLP.³⁵

(35) PFLP-Black September sabotage of trans-Alpine oil terminal, Trieste, Italy, 5 August 1972: International operation; successful.

A "squad" of Palestinian saboteurs infiltrated a guarded oil facility and destroyed six (of 25) oil tanks, causing an estimated \$7 million in damage.³⁶

(36) Black September attack on Israeli athletes at Munich Olympic Village, Germany, 5 September 1972: International operation; successful.

Eight terrorists traveled to Germany from three different points (Libya, Rome, and Belgrade). Intelligence in preparation of the raid was excellent and the site of the operation was thoroughly reconnoitered. The objective was to seize the Israeli athletes and hold them hostage for the release of 236 Palestinians in Israeli jails. Two of the athletes were killed at the beginning of the Palestinians' assault. Later, while the terrorists and hostages boarded government helicopters as part of a deal made with the West German government, police marksmen opened fire on the group. In the ensuing battle, all nine hostages were killed, along with five terrorists (the remaining three were captured).³⁷

(37) Black September attack on Israeli embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, 28 December 1972: International operation; successful.

Four Palestinian terrorists gained entrance to an Israeli embassy party by wearing black tie and posing as guests. Six hostages were taken (including two ambassadors), but they were later released in return for the Thai government's promise of safe passage for the terrorists out of Thailand.³⁸

³⁵Mickolus, *Transnational Terrorism*, pp. 321-324.

³⁶Ibid., p. 335.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 338-343.

³⁸Ibid., p. 367.

(38) PFLP-GC attack on Kiryat Shmonae, Israel, 11 April 1974: Cross-border operation; successful.

A barricade-and-hostage operation was staged by three terrorists who crossed into Israel from Lebanon on foot. They infiltrated a lightly guarded rural town and seized a number of civilian hostages. In an assault to free the hostages by Israeli forces, all three terrorists were killed, as were 18 of the hostages (16 were wounded).³⁹

(39) PDFLP attack on Ma'alot, Israel, 15 May 1974: Cross-border operation; successful.

Three terrorists crossed into Israel on foot from Lebanon and seized a schoolhouse, holding the children in it as hostages. All three terrorists were killed when Israeli security forces stormed the schoolhouse (24 children were killed, and 65 were wounded).⁴⁰

(40) PFLP-GC attack on Shamir, Israel, 13 June 1974: Cross-border operation; successful.

Four Palestinian terrorists killed three Israelis and wounded three others before being cornered by armed settlers who killed one after his three comrades had committed suicide.⁴¹

(41) Al Fatah raid on Nahariya, Israel, 25 June 1974: Cross-border operation; successful.

Three terrorists traveled to Israel from Lebanon in a small boat to attack the coastal city of Nahariya. Four civilians were killed and eight were wounded before the terrorists themselves were killed in a shootout with Israeli security forces (during which one soldier was killed and six others were injured).⁴²

³⁹Ibid., pp. 446-447.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 453-454.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 459-460.

⁴²Ibid., p. 461.

**(42) Abortive Palestinian seaborne raid on Israel, 10 August 1974:
Cross-border operation; failure.**

Three to five men traveled south from Lebanon in a rubber dinghy. The dinghy was spotted by an Israeli patrol vessel and was sunk. All of its occupants died.⁴³

**(43) Abortive PDFLP raid in Israel, 24 September 1974:
Cross-border operation; failure.**

Two separate groups of two men each were intercepted and killed by an Israeli patrol as they crossed into Israel from Lebanon.⁴⁴

**(44) PDFLP attack on Bet Shean, Israel, 19 November 1974:
Cross-border operation; failure.**

Three terrorists who traveled on foot from Lebanon to seize hostages were foiled by the Israeli Army. All three raiders were killed, but not before they succeeded in killing four civilians and wounding 19.⁴⁵

**(45) Al Fatah attack on Tel Aviv, Israel, 5 March 1975:
Cross-border operation; successful.**

Eight men traveled from Lebanon by boat to an unknown point off the Israeli coast. They then transferred into two rubber dinghies and landed on a Tel Aviv beach. Their original plan was to seize a municipal youth center, but the raiders were discovered by an Israeli police patrol and fled to the Hotel Savoy, where they seized 10 hostages (30 others escaped). Israeli security forces assaulted the hotel, killing seven of the raiders and wounding the eighth (three soldiers and eight hostages were also killed, and 12 others were wounded).⁴⁶

⁴³Ibid., p. 470.

⁴⁴*Facts on File*, September 24, 1979, p. 954.

⁴⁵Mickolus, *Transnational Terrorism*, p. 490.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 512-513.

(46) Palestinian group's abortive raid into Israel, 4 August 1977: Cross-border operation; failure.

Five attackers crossed into Israel from Jordan but were surprised by an Israeli Army patrol. Three terrorists were killed and two were wounded.⁴⁷

(47) Abortive Al Fatah attack near Tel Aviv, Israel, 11 March 1978: Cross-border operation; failure.

Eleven terrorists traveled in small rubber dinghies after transferring from a larger craft, en route to Tel Aviv. The terrorists mistakenly landed north of their objective, after two of them were drowned at sea. They stopped a crowded bus on a coastal highway and commandeered it, seizing its passengers as hostages. Israeli security forces set up a roadblock and forced the bus to stop. In the ensuing gunfight, all nine terrorists were killed, along with 46 hostages (185 others were wounded).⁴⁸

(48) PLO-Arab Liberation Front attack on Misgav Am, Israel, 7 April 1980: Cross-border operation; failure.

Five raiders attempted to seize hostages at a remote border settlement. The terrorists had crossed into Israel from Lebanon on foot but drew fire from settlement guards upon attempting to enter. All five terrorists were killed, as were two civilian guards and one soldier.⁴⁹

(49) PLO-Al Fatah attack on Jewish settler/militants in Hebron, occupied West Bank, Israel, 3 May 1980: Cross-border operation; successful.

An unknown number of terrorists came to Hebron from across the border in Jordan to ambush a group of well-armed and trained Jewish settlers. The gunmen, who positioned themselves on surrounding rooftops, killed five settlers and wounded 17 others before escaping unmolested.⁵⁰

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 717-718.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 777-778.

⁴⁹*Facts on File*, April 7, 1980, p. 260.

⁵⁰Ibid., May 4, 1980, p. 340.

(50) Abortive attempt by Palestinian terrorists to enter Israeli territory by air, 20 July 1980: Cross-border operation; failure.

Airborne Palestinian terrorists attempted to enter Israeli territory in a gas-filled balloon loaded with automatic weapons, explosives, and anti-tank grenades. The balloon crashed in southern Lebanon, 13 kilometers west of the Israeli border, but its occupants escaped.⁵¹

(51) Palestinian terrorist use of ultralight motorized glider to cross border into Israel, 7 March 1981: Cross-border operation; failure.

A lone Palestinian terrorist flew into Israel from Lebanon in an "ultralight" motorized glider on a sabotage mission. He was captured by police, however, after trying to take an Israeli civilian hostage.⁵²

(52) Abortive attempt by Palestinian terrorists to enter Israel by air, 16 April 1981: Cross-border operation; failure.

Two teen-age Palestinian terrorists attempted to travel from Lebanon into Israel in a hot-air balloon. The balloon was spotted by Israeli troops, who opened fire on it, killing the two terrorists.⁵³

(53) Abortive Palestinian raid on Israel, 16 June 1981: Cross-border operation; failure.

A seaborne assault by three guerrillas was foiled when an Israeli patrol boat intercepted and sank the infiltration craft. All three guerrillas died.⁵⁴

UNITED STATES OPERATIONS

The U.S. military maintains a commando capability in the form of a counterterrorist joint task force, the Army's Special Forces (Green Berets), three Ranger battalions, and the nine reconnaissance platoons (one per infantry battalion) of the 82nd Airborne. During the Vietnam

⁵¹*Los Angeles Times*, 30 July 1980.

⁵²United Press International, 7 March 1981.

⁵³Reuters, 16 April 1984.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

War, a number of covert operations were carried out in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos by U.S. and South Vietnamese forces and the Australian Special Air Service (SAS). However, information regarding them is difficult to acquire.

(54) Raid on Son Tay prison camp, North Vietnam, 20/21 November 1970: International operation; failure.

An attempted rescue of American POWs by 56 U.S. Army Special Forces personnel who traveled in three helicopters from Thailand to North Vietnam failed because intelligence had not ascertained that the POWs had been moved to another prison camp four months earlier.⁵⁵

(55) Raid on Viet Cong prison camp, Mekong Delta, Vietnam, 22 November 1970: Indigenous operation; successful.

Nineteen South Vietnamese POWs were freed from a Viet Cong prison camp and two Viet Cong guards were taken prisoner by 15 U.S. Navy personnel and 19 South Vietnamese militiamen. Similar operations rescued 48 other South Vietnamese POWs in 1970.⁵⁶

(56) Raid on Koh Tang Island, Gulf of Siam, Republic of Kampuchea, 14/15 May 1975: International operation; failure.

An international operation was mounted to rescue the U.S. merchant ship *Mayaguez* and her 40-man crew, which had been seized by Kampuchean (Cambodian) forces while en route to Thailand. A 213-man force of U.S. Marines (who had no specific commando-type training) was assembled and moved from its base in Okinawa to a staging point in Thailand. Flying in eight helicopters, the Marines attacked Koh Tang Island, where the *Mayaguez* crew was believed to be held. Meanwhile, a smaller Marine force, traveling aboard the destroyer escort *Harold E. Holt*, boarded the *Mayaguez* unopposed. The force that landed on Koh Tang encountered heavy enemy resistance from Kampuchean units stationed on the island. The *Mayaguez* crew was not, however, on the island, as U.S. intelligence had reported, but had been moved to another island 40 km northwest of Koh Tang. Coincidentally, as the Marine assault began, the *Mayaguez* crew

⁵⁵Benjamin Schemmer, *The Raid*, Harper and Row, New York, 1970.

⁵⁶*Facts on File*, November 26-December 2, 1970, p. 866.

was released and brought aboard the U.S. Navy destroyer *Wilson* by a Thai fishing boat. President Ford then ordered the cessation of all offensive military action. Casualties to U.S. personnel were 15 dead, three missing, and 50 wounded. In addition, three helicopters were lost and ten were damaged. As was the case in the Son Tay raid, U.S. intelligence had failed to discover that the prisoners had been moved and had also severely underestimated the size of the Kampuchean force on Koh Tang.⁵⁷

(57) Attempted rescue of 53 American hostages held captive in the U.S. embassy compound, Teheran, Iran, 24 April 1980: International operation; failure.

In an international operation staged by 180 U.S. Army, Air Force, and Marine personnel, six C-130 Hercules air transports traveled an undisclosed route from a base (presumed to be in Egypt) to "Desert One," the mission's staging point in Iran's Dahst-e-Kavir desert, approximately 250 miles south of Teheran. Eight RH-53D "Sea Stallion" helicopters simultaneously took off from the aircraft carrier *Nimitz* in the Arabian Gulf to rendezvous with the transports at "Desert One." While en route, however, two of the helicopters developed mechanical difficulties. One was forced to land (its crew was later picked up), and the other returned to the *Nimitz*. The remaining six helicopters were required for the mission's success. One of the six was determined to be unflyable upon landing at "Desert One," and the mission was aborted. While refueling in preparation for departure, one of the helicopters collided with a C-130. An explosion occurred, killing eight men and necessitating the rapid evacuation of the rest of the force before Iranian police or Army personnel arrived. The remaining five helicopters were abandoned, and the rest of the U.S. force was safely lifted from "Desert One" by the C-130s. The mission's failure was attributed to:

- The delay in deciding to act,
- Lack of adequate preparation and training,

⁵⁷Ibid., May 17, 1975, p. 329.

- The failure to carry additional helicopters aboard the *Nimitz*,
- The use of too few helicopters, and
- Poor meteorological information (meteorologists failed to anticipate the weather conditions, i.e., sudden sandstorms, in the Iranian desert).

RHODESIAN OPERATIONS: THE SELOUS SCOUTS⁵⁸

The Selous Scouts Regiment of Rhodesia, a special commando unit of the Rhodesian Army, was established in 1973 "for the express purpose of combating terrorism and terrorist insurgents, both inside and outside of Rhodesia, after it had been found that conventional means of getting to grips with them no longer worked." The unit was specially trained in counterinsurgency warfare and surreptitious penetration into enemy territory.⁵⁹

(58) Kidnapping of Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) terrorists from Francistown, Botswana, March 1974: Cross-border operation; successful.

An eight-man team comprising four European and four African Scouts was clandestinely infiltrated into Francistown, where a ZIPRA⁶⁰ headquarters and recruiting station was located. The mission's objective was to kidnap several terrorists and bring them back to Rhodesia for interrogation. The raiders captured four occupants of the headquarters and drove them back across the border to Rhodesia without incident.⁶¹

⁵⁸Named for Frederick Courteney Selous, a nineteenth century pioneer of Rhodesia, renowned as Africa's greatest big-game hunter.

⁵⁹Peter Stiff, *Selous Scouts: A Pictorial Account*, Alberton, Republic of South Africa, Galago, 1984, p. 7.

⁶⁰The military wing of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), led by Joseph Nkomo.

⁶¹Stiff, op. cit., p. 79.

(59) Kidnapping of ZIPRA official from Francistown, Botswana, September 1974: Cross-border operation; successful.

In a repeat of their earlier successful mission, a three-man team of Scouts (two Europeans and one African) was infiltrated into Francistown. Their job was to locate and kidnap a senior ZIPRA official. After much surveillance, several false leads, and some reconnaissance, the team finally located their man. They waited until he went to sleep, then two of the raiders simply knocked on his door. When he opened it, a fierce struggle erupted. Finally, the ZIPRA official was subdued, placed in the back of a car, and taken across the border to Rhodesia. However, the team left their false passports, radio transmitter, and weapons behind in a hotel room, along with an unpaid bill. One of the European members of the team volunteered to go back to Francistown, collect the weapons and radio, and pay the hotel bill--which he did without any trouble and returned safely to Rhodesia.⁶²

(60) Raid on Caponda, Mozambique, March 1975: Cross-border operation; failure.

An assault was made on a ZANLA⁶³ staging base 55 km south of Rhodesia by 20 Scouts who traveled to and from the target on foot. After a 24-hour march, the unit came upon the terrorist base, only to find it deserted. A cholera epidemic had broken out among the terrorists and the camp had been evacuated. The unit returned safely to Rhodesia.⁶⁴

(61) Operation Underdog: attack on Chicombidzi base, Mozambique, 17 January 1976: Cross-border operation; successful.

A helicopter-borne assault by 15 Scouts against a ZANLA transit camp destroyed the camp, although no prisoners were taken (the taking of prisoners was an ancillary objective of the operation). The following day, the raiding party was evacuated back to Rhodesia by helicopter.⁶⁵

⁶²Lt. Col. Ron Reid Daly (as told to Peter Stiff), *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, Alberton, South Africa, Galago, 1982, pp. 117-119.

⁶³The Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army, the military wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), led by Robert Mugabe.

⁶⁴Daly, op. cit., pp. 133-134.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 157-158.

(62) Operation Traveller: attack on Caponda base, Mozambique: 27 April 1976: Cross-border operation; successful.

The base attacked by the Scouts in March 1975 was rebuilt and was again active as a terrorist staging area, so the Scouts mounted another attack against it, using the exact same plan of attack as before. Again, a 20-man patrol marched into Mozambique, attacked and destroyed the camp, killed seven terrorists, and wounded 16. The raiding party returned to Rhodesia on foot,⁶⁶ several of them having been injured.

(63) Operation Detachment: raid on Chigamane, Mozambique, 13 May 1976: Cross-border operation; successful.

A raid was staged on a ZANLA terrorist base 180 km inside the Mozambican border from Rhodesia by 20 European and African Scouts. The members of the raiding party dressed in FRELIMO⁶⁷ uniforms to hide their true identity and traveled in four military vehicles that were similarly disguised to look like those used by the Mozambican army. The ZANLA terrorist base was attacked and destroyed with rockets, mortars, and machine guns. The raiders returned to Rhodesia safely.⁶⁸

(64) Operation Long John: attack on Mapai, Mozambique, 25 June 1976: Cross-border operation; successful.

A column of four trucks and two Scouts cars disguised as FRELIMO military vehicles containing 58 Scouts traveled some 80 km into Mozambican territory to attack a ZANLA base in Mapai. Along the way, the raiders disconnected telephone lines and sabotaged the railway line. The column was allowed to enter the terrorist base by an unwitting sentry. Once inside, sappers destroyed thirteen 50-seat Mercedes buses used to transport terrorists to the border (one bus was spared and was taken back to Rhodesia as a souvenir). In addition, the armory was confiscated (and brought back as well) before an airstrike was called in

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 163-164.

⁶⁷*Frente da Libertacao de Mocambique*, the Marxist-Leninist guerrilla organization that fought against Mozambique's Portuguese rulers until the country gained independence in 1974; FRELIMO then became the new country's army.

⁶⁸Stiff, *Selous Scouts*, p. 87.

to destroy the base. Nineteen terrorists were reported killed, and 18 were wounded; one member of the raiding party was killed and a few were wounded.⁶⁹

(65) Nyadzonya/Pungwe raid, Mozambique, 9 August 1976: Cross-border operation; successful.

A raid on a large ZANLA base 100 km inside of Mozambique was made by a Scouts column comprising 10 trucks and four armored cars, again disguised as FRELIMO vehicles. The Scouts in the first four vehicles were also dressed in FRELIMO uniforms. They cut the telephone lines leading to the town where the terrorist base was located, then drove straight into the camp, where the vehicles "formed into a neat firing line on the edge of the parade ground.... Nothing could have prepared [the attacking force] for what they saw on the parade ground. It was the largest number of terrorists any Rhodesian soldier would ever see at one time, during the whole war." The terrorists drilling in front of the column broke ranks and rushed toward the vehicles, believing them to be a new consignment of military vehicles and weapons. The order to open fire was given just as the mob reached the trucks: 1,028 terrorists were reported killed; only five members of the raiding party were wounded. Further, 14 "important" ZANLA terrorists were captured and taken back to Rhodesia for interrogation. On their way out of Mozambique, the raiding party blew up the Pungwe Bridge to prevent any pursuit and returned to Rhodesia safely. In a separate action, the covering team deployed to block pursuit of the column ambushed a Land Rover whose six occupants were found to be senior ZANLA officers; all six were killed.⁷⁰

(66) Operation Mardon: attack on Jorge do Limpopo and Massangena, Mozambique, 30-31 October 1976: Cross-border raid; successful.

A column of Scouts trucks and armored cars attacked a ZANLA base at Jorge do Limpopo, 60 km inside Mozambique. The strike force traveled a circuitous 350- to 400-km round-trip route, and two reconnaissance teams (consisting of three and two men, respectively) were air-dropped into

⁶⁹Daly, *Selous Scouts*, pp. 171-178.

⁷⁰Stiff, *Selous Scouts*, pp. 92-98.

Mozambique in advance of the column. Upon entering Mozambique, the raiding party laid claymore mines on roads and booby-trapped the rail line. Telegraph and telephone lines were also cut. The column then launched a succession of attacks, destroying a FRELIMO garrison, derailing a troop train and killing 36 of the terrorists on board, and destroying a large water reservoir, as well as railway switching points and several enemy military vehicles. In addition, they killed a senior FRELIMO commander. On 2 November, the Scouts returned to Rhodesia, having destroyed the terrorists' logistical base of support; disrupted communications between Jorge do Limpopo, Malverina, and Massengena; wrecked two trains; destroyed all motor transport in the area; and sowed landmines in various spots. This operation effectively undercut ZANLA's operational capacity and weakened the terrorists' morale.⁷¹

(67) Operation Ignition: attack on ZIPRA, Francistown, Botswana, 18 November 1976: Cross-border raid; successful.

Information was received by Rhodesian intelligence sources that ZIPRA had been given several suitcase bombs by the Soviet KGB for use in a forthcoming urban terrorist campaign in Rhodesia. In fact, some of the suitcase bombs had been discovered in Rhodesia before they could be used. Since the remainder of the stockpile was stored in ZIPRA's headquarters in Francistown, a team of Scouts was sent to destroy the bombs. (Diplomatic entreaties to the Botswana Government to arrest the planners of the terrorist campaign had failed.) Four of the captured suitcase bombs were carried by nine Scouts (four Europeans and five Africans) who crossed into Botswana via an isolated bush road in unmarked vehicles. The Rhodesian team made their way to Francistown undetected and placed their own bombs in the ZIPRA headquarters. The blast destroyed the building, wounding five terrorists.⁷²

⁷¹Daly, *Selous Scouts*, pp. 231-239.

⁷²Stiff, *Selous Scouts*, pp. 102-103.

(68) Operation Aztec: attack on Jorge do Limpopo, Mapai, and Madulo Pan, Mozambique, May/June 1977: Cross-border operation; successful.

A column consisting of 110 Scouts traveled 230 km into Mozambique to attack several ZANLA bases. The Scouts were disguised as FRELIMO soldiers, and their vehicles were altered to look like FRELIMO vehicles. A railway line, the terrorist bases' chief source of supply, was destroyed. In addition, military vehicles and equipment were seized or destroyed by airstrikes flown in support of the raiders.⁷³

(69) Attempted kidnapping of Joshua Nkomo in Lusaka, Zambia, 13 April 1979: Cross-border operation; failure.

An undisclosed number of Selous Scouts disguised as Zambian soldiers and traveling in Land Rovers designed to look like Zambian Army vehicles specially mounted on pontoons crossed into Zambia from Rhodesia. They drove to Lusaka and attacked Nkomo's residence at ZAPU's well-guarded headquarters. In a 2-hour raid, 10 ZAPU soldiers were killed and 12 were wounded (two ZAPU buildings were also destroyed). Nkomo, however, was not in Lusaka at the time. The raiders safely withdrew and returned to Rhodesia (Zambia claimed that three raiders were in fact killed, but this was denied by the Rhodesians).⁷⁴ Four previous plans had also failed--the detonation of a car loaded with explosives, and three attempts by Scouts to land by helicopter and rendezvous with an advance team to Nkomo's house. One plan failed because of a bridge washed out by rains; one because of a parachute misdrop; and another because of a failure to get the rendezvous radio signal because the contact man was captured by Zambian forces.⁷⁵

⁷³Ibid., pp. 274-280.

⁷⁴"Zambia Reports Raid by Rhodesian Troops on Nkomo Residence," *The New York Times*, April 13, 1979, p. 1.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 147-148.

(70) Operation Vodka: raid on Mboroma ZIPRA camp, Zambia, 22 December 1979: Cross-border operation; successful.

Intelligence reports about the existence of a ZIPRA prison camp containing 120 opponents of the terrorist organization along with some African members of the Rhodesian security forces prompted the Scouts to undertake a reconnaissance mission. The reports were confirmed by a two-man team parachuted near the camp, and an assault party of 42 paratroops was assembled for the operation. After fighter-bombers softened the area, which was approximately 160 km inside Zambia, the troops parachuted in and, under cover of mortar fire, advanced on the camp. Resistance was quickly overcome; 18 guards were killed and six were captured. Only 32 prisoners were found, because the rest were outside the camp on work details. In the evening, the raiders and freed prisoners were airlifted back to Rhodesia from a nearby airfield.⁷⁶

(71) Operation Petal I: Botswana, 22 March 1979: Cross-border operation; successful.

Rhodesian intelligence sources learned that Elliot Sibanda, a senior ZIPRA intelligence operative, would be helping to ferry some newly acquired vehicles to a ZIPRA camp. A team of Scouts crept across the border into Botswana and laid an ambush. Although badly wounded, Sibanda was captured and brought back to Rhodesia alive.⁷⁷

(72) Operation Petal II: Francistown, Botswana, 13 April 1979: Cross-border operation; successful.

Based on information obtained from by Sibanda, the Scouts learned that President Khama of Botswana was not entirely sympathetic to ZIPRA and had laid down strict rules forbidding the terrorists to possess arms while in Botswana. To enforce his ruling, the Botswana police and army made frequent checks of ZIPRA camps for arms. Sibanda also told his interrogators that the entire ZIPRA southern command operated out of a particular house in Francistown. An ambitious plan was hatched to use armored cars identical to those of the Botswana military to kidnap the

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 136-138.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 150.

ZIPRA southern command. On 13 April, a small column consisting of two disguised armored cars and some other trucks drove across the border to Francistown. The Scouts, dressed in Botswana military uniforms, arrived at the ZIPRA house and arrested its occupants. Before the victims realized what had happened, they were back in Rhodesia.⁷⁸

SOUTH AFRICA

(73) Raid on Maputo, Mozambique, January 1981: Cross-border operation; successful.

South African commandos traveled 50 miles in armored personnel carriers to attack three African National Congress (ANC) commando posts just outside of Maputo. The posts were assaulted with mortars, rockets, and grenades. Eleven ANC members were killed, two South African soldiers were wounded, and a Portuguese civilian was killed.

(74) South African raid into Angola, March 13, 1982: Cross-border operation; successful.

Forty-five members of an elite South African counterinsurgency battalion crossed into Angola to destroy a South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) guerrilla supply station. The unit, made up largely of blacks who had served in the Portuguese Army before Angolan independence, took the supply station by surprise. In the ensuing 7-1/2 hour operation, 210 guerrillas were killed and the unit suffered three losses.⁷⁹

(75) South African raid on Maseru, Lesotho, December 1982: Cross-border operation; successful.

Helicopter-borne South African troops assaulted the capital of this independent black state in what was claimed to be a preemptive assault on ANC guerrillas planning a sabotage operation in South Africa. The raiding party failed to kill three key ANC leaders that it sought, but nevertheless 30 ANC suspects and 12 Lesotho citizens were killed by the raiders.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 151-153.

⁷⁹Facts on File, 1982, p. 213-214.

MISCELLANEOUS ELITE UNIT OPERATIONS

(76) Rescue of hostages held aboard hijacked Dutch train near Groningen, Netherlands, 11 June 1977: Indigenous operation; successful.

On 23 May 1977, South Moluccan terrorists seized an express train in the Netherlands and took 51 persons hostage. After three weeks of fruitless negotiation, the government reluctantly ordered that force be used to free the hostages. As Dutch F-104 Air Force jets streaked overhead "wingtip to wingtip ... and bathed the train in the fiery blast of their after burners" (to confuse and distract the terrorists), 30 Royal Dutch Marines stormed the train. Six of the nine terrorists and two of the hostages were killed; the Royal Marines suffered no casualties.⁸⁰

(77) Simultaneous rescue of hostages held at nearby schoolhouse in Bovensmilde, Netherlands, 11 June 1977: Indigenous operation; successful.

On the same day, another team of South Moluccan terrorists had taken over a schoolhouse 12 miles from where the train was seized. In a simultaneous operation, 25 Royal Dutch Marines stormed the school behind an armored personnel carrier that had burst halfway through a brick and glass wall of the school. There were no casualties in this operation, and all four terrorists were apprehended.⁸¹

(78) Rescue of hostages held aboard hijacked Lufthansa aircraft in Mogadishu, Somalia, 18 October 1977: International operation; successful.

A raiding force of 30 West German commandos of the special anti-terrorist detachment of the Border Police, GSG-9 (*Grenzschutzgruppe Neun*), that was created after the massacre at the 1972 Munich Olympics were flown to Somalia from Germany, with a backup team of 30. Lufthansa Flight 181 had been hijacked by four terrorists while in flight from Mallorca to Frankfurt and was eventually brought to Mogadishu. With the complete cooperation of the Somalian government, the Germans informed the hijackers that a plane landing at Mogadishu Airport was carrying the

⁸⁰*Newsweek*, 20 June 1977.

⁸¹*Ibid.*

Baader-Meinhoff Gang prisoners whose release the hijackers had demanded. The plane, in fact, contained the commandos, dressed in black and with their faces blackened. They silently approached the rear of the hijacked aircraft, placing step ladders beside its doors. A burning oil drum was then rolled from the rear of the plane toward its nose and down the runway to attract the hijackers' attention. At that moment, the commandos burst into the plane, throwing special British-made "stun grenades" that blind and deafen anyone around them for several seconds. Three of the hijackers were shot to death by the commandos, and one was wounded. Only one of the raiders was injured, along with four hostages.⁸²

(79) Attempted rescue of 30 hostages by Egyptian commandos, Larnaca, Cyprus, 18 February 1978: International operation; failure.

This rescue attempt (unlike that at Mogadishu) was staged *without* the cooperation or knowledge of the host government. Two renegade Palestinian terrorists who earlier had assassinated Yusuf el Sabai, editor of Cairo's *Al-Ahram* newspaper and a close friend of President Anwar Sadat, seized 30 hostages whom they threatened to execute if they were not given safe passage out of Cyprus. The hostages and their captors were allowed to proceed to Larnaca Airport, where they boarded a Cyprus Airways DC-8. In the midst of negotiations between the Cypriot government and the two terrorists, an Egyptian C-130 landed at the airport, supposedly containing Egyptian government officials who would assist in the negotiations. Instead, the plane contained 100 commandos, who burst out of the aircraft and proceeded to attack the Cypriot DC-8. Cypriot National Guardsmen and a team of Palestinian commandos sent by PLO leader Yasir Arafat to assist the Cypriots opened fire on the Egyptian commandos, killing 15 and wounding 16 (seven National Guardsmen were also injured). The two terrorists then surrendered. The Cypriots claimed that the Egyptians had deliberately lied to them regarding the nature of the C-130's passengers. Egypt, in turn, argued that they could not inform the Cypriots of their plans for fear of a breach in secrecy. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were broken because of the incident.⁸³

⁸²Mickolus, *Transnational Terrorism*, pp. 734-740.

⁸³*Ibid.*, pp. 774-776.

**(80) Rescue of hostages held at Iranian embassy in London,
5 May 1980: Indigenous operation; successful.**

This rescue operation was carried out by members of the 22nd Special Air Service (SAS) regiment. The SAS was formed during World War II for commando and infiltration operations. In 1971, the first SAS units were sent to Northern Ireland. Although exact figures are kept secret, there are believed to be about 1,000 SAS members. On 30 April, six armed Iranian Arabs took over the Iranian embassy in London and held 26 hostages for nearly six days. During the course of negotiations, five hostages were sporadically released. On 5 May, however, shots were heard from inside the embassy, and the body of a dead hostage was dumped out the front door of the building. The gunmen then announced that they would kill an additional hostage every 30 minutes until the government acceded to their demand for safe passage out of the country. Authorities immediately sent into action their one plan in reserve. Twelve black-garbed SAS commandos stormed the embassy, lowering themselves by ropes from the roof and crawling in windows. The gunmen panicked and opened fire on the hostages killing one and wounding several others. Explosions caused by the "stun-grenades" used by the commandos to disorient the terrorists and catch them by surprise, however, quickly started fires which rushed through the building and eventually gutted it completely. Five of the six terrorists were killed and 19 of the 21 remaining hostages were rescued (two died in the course of the rescue attempt).⁸⁴

**(81) Rescue of hostages aboard hijacked Indonesian Airways plane,
Bangkok, Thailand, 31 March 1981: International operation;
successful.**

Twenty Indonesian commandos traveled by plane from Indonesia to Thailand to rescue 180 persons held hostage by five Indonesian hijackers. The commandos had the complete support of the Thai government. In the

⁸⁴The Sunday Times (London), 11 May 1980.

surprise raid, four of the hijackers were killed, and the fifth was taken prisoner. Only one commando was injured, along with the pilot of the hijacked aircraft.⁸⁵

ANTI-CASTRO CUBAN COMMANDO MISSIONS DURING THE 1960S

(82) Seaborne attack by Alpha-66 commandos, 10 September 1962: Cross-border operation; successful.

A group of between 5 and 15 Alpha-66 commandos aboard a 40-ft high-speed launch entered the harbor of Caibarien on the northern coast of Cuba and attacked two Cuban ships and a British freighter.

(83) Alpha-66 raid on Cuban military facility, Isabela de Sagua, Cuba, 8 October 1962: Cross-border operation; successful.

Ten to 15 commandos belonging to an anti-Castro exile group working from an undisclosed base claimed to have dynamited a railway switchyard, an arsenal, a commissary, and four other "strategic points," killing 20 Cuban and Russian soldiers before escaping.⁸⁶

(84) Commando sinking of Cuban patrol boat, 12 October 1963: Cross-border operation; successful.

Six members of an unidentified anti-Castro group in a high-speed boat sank a Cuban patrol craft off Catanzas Province.

(85) Combined Alpha-66 and Second Front of Escambray attack on Soviet vessel in Cuban port, 18 March 1963: Cross-border operation; successful.

Two launches carrying a combined assault team of Alpha-66 and Second Front of Escambray commandos attacked the Soviet freighter *Lvov* while it was anchored in the bay off Isabela de Sagua. After inflicting heavy damage on the ship, the commandos went ashore and attacked a Soviet infantry camp, wounding 12 soldiers. They then fled to safety in the United States.

⁸⁵"Indonesia Storms Hijacked Airliner," *The New York Times*, April 1, 1981, p. 1.

⁸⁶*Facts on File*, October 11-17, 1962, p. 352.

(86) Combined seaborne assault on Soviet vessel by Alpha-66 and Commandos L, 27 March 1963: Cross-border operation; successful.

Members of Alpha-66 and Commandos L departed from a secret naval base in Miami on board the 43-ft yacht *Alisan*, bound for Cuba. In tow was the speedboat *Phoenix*, which was taken into Caibarien port to attack the Soviet merchantman *Baku*. Frogmen attached a limpet mine to the *Baku's* hull, sinking the ship with its cargo of 10,000 bags of sugar.

(87) Plot to kidnap Soviet advisers from Cuba, 8 June 1969: Cross-border operation; failure.

This operation, code-named "Red Cross," was financed by William Pawley (a former U.S. Ambassador to Brazil and Peru, co-founder of the famous "Flying Tigers" of World War II, multimillionaire, and fervent anti-Communist), in the hope of kidnapping two Soviet military advisors from Cuba and bringing them back to the United States to prove that Russian missiles were still in Cuba, as well as to embarrass President Kennedy. A team of commandos led by an American adventurer, Eddie Bayo, left Florida for Cuba but were never heard from again.

(88) Unidentified anti-Castro group's attack on sugar refinery, Archabaldo, Cuba, 11 June 1963: Cross-border operation; successful.

A force of 10 anti-Castro Cubans traveling from an undisclosed port in the Caribbean Sea aboard a converted PT boat armed with machine guns and a 30mm cannon attacked a sugar refinery, killing two Cuban soldiers and capturing two others before fleeing to safety.⁸⁷

(89) Seaborne attack against Cuban targets, 30 June 1963: Cross-border operation; successful.

Two large trawlers, manned by Cuban exiles, left Miami with four high-speed V-20 boats in tow. Twelve miles off the coast of Isabela de Sagua, three of the V-20 speedboats carried out a raid against a railroad bridge and telephone lines. One V-20 was lost in the attack.

⁸⁷*Facts on File*, May 16-22, 1963, p. 184.

**(90) Alpha-66 assault on Caibarien harbor, 10 September 1963:
Cross-border operation; successful.**

An Alpha-66 commando team entered the Cuban port at Caibarien on board a specially outfitted high-speed launch. The commandos shot up the Cuban freighter *San Pascual* and the British merchantmen *Newlane* and *San Blas*, which were anchored nearby.

(91) Attempted sabotage operation by Commando Mambases, 21 October 1963: Cross-border operation; failure.

The 174-ft *Rex*, a refurbished World War II subchaser/patrol craft outfitted with a souped-up 3600 hp engine and able to do 20 kn, was armed with two 40mm naval cannon, two 20mm cannon, two .50-cal machine guns, and a 57mm recoilless rifle. Special mounts and a crane were also fitted to raise and lower 20-ft speedboats constructed of fiberglass and possessing muffled 100-hp engines. The *Rex*'s mission was to carry two boatloads of 12 commandos each from the *Commando Mambases* (whose total strength was no more than 50 men) to rubber dinghies for an undisclosed assignment in Cuba. A trap was apparently set for the commandos, however, and they were attacked by Cuban patrol craft. The two boats of commandos returned to the *Rex* and started to flee to Florida. Cuban pursuit boats and helicopters then spotted the Liberian-registered freighter *J. Louis*, which they mistook for the *Rex* and opened fire on it. Five Cuban MiG 21s then joined the attack. Miraculously, no one aboard the *J. Louis* was hurt. In the confusion, the *Rex* sneaked back to Florida.

**(92) Capture of Alpha-66 commandos in Cuba, 23 September 1969:
Cross-border operation; failure.**

Nine members of Alpha-66, undertaking an operation to foment unrest in Cuba, were either killed or captured by Cuban security forces after landing on the island by boat.

MISCELLANEOUS IRREGULAR FORCE OPERATIONS

(93) Private venture raid on Santa Marta Acatilla prison, Mexico, 18 August 1971: Cross-border operation; successful.

A lone helicopter pilot snatched two prisoners from the prison, whose guards were so surprised that they did not have time to fire.

(94) Private venture raid on Southern Michigan state prison, Lansing, Michigan, 6 June 1975: Indigenous operation; successful.

One person hijacked a chartered helicopter and ordered the pilot to hover above the prison exercise yard where a waiting prisoner was lifted to freedom.⁸⁸

(95) Private venture raid on Piedras Negras jail, Mexico, 12 March 1976: Cross-border operation; successful.

Three armed Americans, paid by a wealthy Texan to free his son and 13 other American prisoners from a Mexican prison, released the prisoners, who all escaped safely back to the United States.⁸⁹

(96) Private venture raid on Iganga jail, Uganda, circa 10 March 1977: Indigenous operation; successful.

Five armed soldiers attacked the jail to free the brother of a wealthy Ugandan businessman. The prisoner escaped, along with 600 other inmates.⁹⁰

(97) IRA attack on Kileen Bridge, County Armagh, Northern Ireland, 21 April 1979: Cross-border operation; successful.

Twenty Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Irish National Liberation Army men traveled to a railway crossing in five trucks, which they used to block the path of a freight train that had just entered Northern Ireland. The engineer was ordered to proceed and then stop the train on Kileen Bridge. Six or seven demolition experts then placed milk containers laden with explosives onto the train and withdrew. The

⁸⁸Mickolus, *Transnational Terrorism*.

⁸⁹"News in Brief, The World," *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1977, Part I, p. 2.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, June 12, 1976, p. 420.

explosion destroyed the bridge and cut rail service between the Republic of Ireland and British Northern Ireland.⁹¹

**(98) Mercenaries' abortive coup on Seychelles Islands,
26 November 1981: International operation; failure.**

A coup attempt was made on the Seychelles Islands in the Indian Ocean by more than 100 white South African and Rhodesian mercenaries. After the mercenaries had captured the main airport, dissidents already on the island were to have joined them in their struggle. Some of the mercenaries, dressed in khaki shorts, arrived at the airport on a commercial flight from Swaziland. A gun battle broke out when their Soviet-made AK-47 automatic rifles were detected. The mercenaries gained access to the airport control tower and fought for five hours, during which time one of them was killed. Forty-four of the invaders made a confused retreat by hijacking an Air India 707 jetliner that had landed during the battle. The plane was flown to Durban, South Africa, where the hijackers surrendered and the passengers and crewmen were released unharmed. It is questionable how many of the 60-or-so mercenaries who remained were able to escape into the hills, but the fate of those captured was summed up by one police official: "We don't catch people. We destroy them." According to a newspaper in Johannesburg, the mercenaries had been recruited there, having been offered \$10,000 each if the coup were successful.⁹²

**(99) Mercenaries' invasion of Laos to rescue U.S. soldiers,
November 1982: Cross-border operation; failure.**

Four U.S. mercenaries and 15 Laotian guerrillas backed by U.S. actors William Shatner and Clint Eastwood traveled to Laos to rescue 120 American soldiers allegedly being held there. *Operation Lazarus* was led by U.S. Army Lt. Col. James (Bo) Gritz. The group was able to infiltrate Laos from Thailand but retreated the following day when a Laotian paramilitary force ambushed them. One American was captured and was later released for \$17,000 ransom and medical supplies.⁹³

⁹¹Mickolus, *Transnational Terrorism*, p. 843.

⁹²*Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1981.

⁹³*U.S. News & World Report* January 31, 1983, from *Facts on File*, 1983, p.76.

(100) Nicaraguan port attack, October 10, 1983: Cross-border operation; successful.

Rebels operating from speedboats attacked dock installations at Nicaragua's main port of Corinto, using mortars and grenades. The attack set off huge fires in four oil tanks which severely damaged warehouses containing coffee and cotton for export. Another tank exploded on October 13, before the fire was put out. At least 10 people were injured, and the destruction of as much as 4 million gallons of gasoline, diesel, and other liquid fuels left Nicaragua with only about a month's supply of oil.⁹⁴

⁹⁴*Facts on File*, 1983, p. 804.

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